

**LIBERATING SHAMANISM: A SPIRITUAL
RESOURCE FOR KOREAN CHRISTIANS**

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ABSTRACT

Liberating Shamanism : A Spiritual Resource for Korean Christians

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Korean Shamanism has a liberating spirituality. It is a spirituality for the people--the poor, oppressed, and socially marginalized. And it offers resources which empower them to transform their existential situation. This liberating spirituality could be used as a resource for the spiritual growth of Korean Christians.

Historically, the elite of Korea have tended to scorn or ignore Shamanism because of its primitive characteristics and superstition. Nevertheless, the shamanistic tradition did not disappear. It is, still, closely woven into the fabric of Korean life and even is a determinant of Korean world-view, as well as its family and social customs at all societal levels.

Christianity in Korea also struggles with shamanistic influence. When the Protestant missionaries brought Christianity to Korea, they forced Korean Christians to throw away all the ways of Korean Shamanism. However, shamanistic tradition is variously found in the spirituality and daily life of the Korean Christian. This project explores the shamanistic influences on Korean Christian spirituality, and examines how the liberating spirituality in Korean Shamanism can be used as a spiritual resource for Korean Christians.

The project is developed as follows. Chapter 1 introduces the project and states the problem, aim of the study, resources and methodology, and structure. Chapter 2 reviews the major characteristics of Korean Shamanism.

Chapter 3 explores Shamanism's influence on Korean Christians. In this chapter, some shamanistic traditions by which Korean people easily accepted Christianity are discussed.

Chapter 4 explores liberating spirituality in Korean Shamanism and evaluates whether it could be used as a spiritual resource for Korean Christians. In Chapter 5 a Bible study model for practicing the liberating spirituality is proposed. Chapter 6 contains a summary of findings and the unfinished task.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Statement of Problem

Shamanism is the oldest religion in Korea. The shamanistic tradition is closely woven into the fabric of Korean life and is even now a determinant of the Korean world-view, as well as its family and social customs at all societal levels. Nevertheless, the academic study of Korean Shamanism has long suffered from neglect, distortion, and cultural bias. Korean Christian leaders need to find out the nature of shamanistic tradition achieved over centuries and bequeathed to them by their ancestors to understand the soil of religiosity of Korean people and to use as a resource for the integrated growth of spirituality.

Korean Shamanism holds an important position from the religious perspective. Shamanism is probably the most basic and pervasive form of Korean religiosity or spirituality. Shamanistic tradition contains many religious practices of human destiny in connection with life, death, misfortune, and blessing. Its faith coexisted along with the introduced foreign religions of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism; it both accepted and was practiced together, and it influenced and mingled with them. Throughout this process, the historical elite of Korea have tended to scorn or ignore Shamanism, particularly after the more sophisticated belief systems of Buddhism and Confucianism made their appearance. However, shamanistic influence on other religions did not disappear. Particularly, at times of individual and social crises, this religion becomes more prevalent.

Even after the modernization of Korean society, the people's practice of this shamanistic faith has not decreased. According to the *Korea Times*, the number of shamans surveyed by the Japanese colonial government in 1930 were about 12,300. At present, the number of shamans who enroll as official members of *Daehan Gyungsin Hyuphwa* (Korean Shaman Association) are about 112,000. If fortunetellers with shamanistic spirit are added to the number, there are about 400,000 shamans in Korea.¹ Many Korean people have lived in dependence on the religious teaching of these shamans. Sometimes, some Christians would visit shamans to resolve their difficult problems.

Christianity in Korea also struggles with issues of shamanistic influence. Since the first Protestant missionaries, Horace Underwood and Henry Appenzeller, went from North America to Korea in 1885, the Korean Church has grown very rapidly. Already the Korean Christian population, including Roman Catholics, has grown to almost 15million, about 30 percent of the country's 45 million inhabitants. This is one of the highest percentages of Christians in any Asian country.

The early missionaries were vigorous in their missionary efforts. Especially, they contributed a great deal towards the modernization of whole areas of Korean society. Modernized schools and hospitals were established by early missionaries. Early missionaries were very conservative and evangelical. They treated other religions as evil. Especially, Shamanism had been regarded as the enemy of Christianity and was categorically rejected by missionaries as idol worship. Early missionaries thought that

¹ "Musok, Yuksulin Sasipman," [Shamanism and fortunetellers] *Korea Times* (Soul), 15 Dec. 1995, A16.

Shamanism was a barrier to modernization. They forced Korean Christians to throw away all the ways of Korean Shamanism. However, shamanistic tradition did not disappear, many shamanistic influences are variously found in the spirituality and daily life of Korean Christians. The Korean Church has heard negative evaluations and criticism because of this phenomenon.

However, since the early 1970s, a handful of Korean theologians have become newly interested in Korean Shamanism. Korean Shamanism began to be studied from the perspective of indigenization theology and minjung theology. Theologians with the idea of indigenization theology understand that the vitality of Korean Christianity was caused by the indigenous Korean religiosity, especially shamanistic spirituality. Minjung theologians insist on the continuity of the two faiths from the perspective of liberating spirituality -- venting the minjung's Han.

Korean Shamanism has been long neglected and distorted, even though it provides the minjung, those suffering from existential predicaments, healing, liberation, and vitality. Especially, it is acknowledged that shamanistic faith greatly contributed to the unprecedented church growth in Korea.² Korean Shamanism easily accepted the other religions. Shamanism did not bother Christianity when it came into Korea. Many people with shamanistic ideas regarded Christianity as a religion of blessing, when they heard the teaching of the truth of salvation. It was fascinating news to Koreans, suffering from poverty, diseases, Japanese colonial reign, and the Korean War, that Christianity gives believers eternal life, healing by faith, and this worldly blessing. Some

² Spencer J. Palmer, Korea and Christianity (Seoul: Hollym Corporation, 1967), 16-17.

shamanistic practices could be compatible with the religious practices of Christianity. For example, they are enthusiastic prayer, mystical experience, liberating spirituality for the oppressed, charismatic leadership style of religious leaders, etc.. These religious experiences could positively influence the acceptance, fixation, and growth of Christianity.

Korean Shamanism has many negative elements; excessive mysticism, miracle-centered faith, blessing-centered faith, the emphasis of demonology, lack of ethical consciousness, and fatalism. However, it also has positive useful elements for the spirituality of Korean Christians: a spirituality venting the minjung's Han, a spirituality for communal life, and a spirituality for women's liberation. Therefore, Korean Shamanism should be newly studied and used as a spiritual resource for Korean Christians.

Aim of the Study

This project assesses the shamanistic influence on Korean Christian spirituality and examine how the liberating spirituality in Korean Shamanism can be used as a spiritual resource for Korean Christians.

Today's Korean Christianity did not come into a cultural vacuum, but into a concrete Korean cultural context. Korean Shamanism is the most basic form of Korean religiosity and spirituality which has influenced the beliefs and ritual of other imported religions. Today's Korean Christianity took root in the soil of shamanistic spirituality. Therefore, Korean church leaders, first of all, should understand Korean indigenous shamanistic faith, its nature, belief system, and rituals. They should study Korean Shamanism not from the perspective of the early Protestant missionaries' theology, but from the perspective of indigenous spirituality and culture.

The purpose of this project is to understand the nature of Korean Shamanism and to establish a proper attitude of the Korean church toward this religion for the further spiritual growth of Korean Christians.

Resources and Methodology

This thesis relies primarily on documentary research, using primary sources whenever possible. The documents investigated are written in English or Korean. The writer translated Korean sources into English. Also, the transliteration of proper names into English is done by the writer. All of the documents are evaluated and interpreted critically.

The main sources used in this study could be classified into two categories : (1) literature about Korean churches, religions, and culture, and (2) Christian education and theological literature. Next to the written literature, the author's personal experiences and observations which are from church life and daily life are used as a source.

The present study employs two dominate perspectives. The one is an anthropological persective, the other a theological perspective. According to Paul G. Hiebert, the anthropological study of religions is not aimed at finding the truth or error of specific beliefs. Rather, it is concerned with people, their culture and the ways in which beliefs operate within the cultural system.³ The writer discusses the basic beliefs of Korean Shamanism in Chapter 2 from an anthropological perspective, not giving specific criticism.

³ Paul G. Hiebert, Cultural Anthropology (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1976), 372.

The writer will follow the viewpoint of minjung theology as a theological perspective. According to Wang Sang Han, “Minjung are those who have been politically oppressed, economically exploited, and socio-culturally discriminated against for a long time.”⁴ In a word, the minjung are the suffering oppressed people. Minjung theology is a liberation theology which is deeply concerned with venting the Han of the poor, sicked, and oppressed. It concerns not only individuals but also the people of the nation. It is a theology which has a global viewpoint for the Christian community as well as for the secular community. The shamanistic elements which are used as spiritual resources for Korean Christian in Chapter 4 are selected from the minjung theological perspective.

In Chapte 5, Thomas Groom’s shared Christian praxis is used as a methodology of Bible study for practicing liberating spirituality. Christian religious education by shared praxis can be described as “a group of Christians sharing in dialogue their critical reflection on present action in light of the Christian story and its vision toward the end of lived Christian faith.”⁵ This methodology contains five elements: (1) present action, (2) critical reflection, (3) dialogue, (4) the Story, and (5) the Vision that arises from the Story. Throughout this process, Korean Christians with shamanistic spirituality can reflect on themselves, dialoguing with the Vision of the Bible and the Christian community, and make a creative vision for the spiritual growth of Korean Christians.

⁴ Wan Sang Han, Minjung Shinhak [Minjung Theology] (Seoul: Chongroseochock, 1984), 26-27.

⁵ Thomas H. Groome, Christian Religious Education: Sharing Our Story and Vision (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980), 184.

Structure

This thesis has been developed as follows. Chapter 1 introduces the project. It states the problem and the aim of the study. It also includes resources, methodology and structure.

Chapter 2 reviews the major characteristics of Korean Shamanism. In this chapter, the historical background of Korean Shamanism, its belief system, and rituals are discussed.

Chapter 3 describes Shamanism and its relationship with Korean Christianity. In this chapter, the phenomena of synthesis between Korean Shamanism and Korean Christian spirituality is investigated.

Chapter 4 investigates liberating spirituality in Korean Shamanism from a minjung theological perspective. The writer examines whether the liberating spirituality in Korean Shamanism could be used as a spiritual resource for Korean Christians.

Chapter 5 proposes a Bible study model for practicing the liberating spirituality.

Chapter 6 is a conclusion. It contains a summary of findings and the unfinished task.

Chapter 2

The Understanding of Korean Shamanism

Shamanism is the oldest religion in Korea. Shamanism's impact upon the Korean mind and culture is as profound as it is old. The Korean value hierarchy, social practices, family life, and political and economic life reflect the influence of Shamanism. According to *Daehan Gyungsin Hyupwae* (Shaman Association), at present, the number of shamans is about 400,000, including fortunetellers with a shamanistic spirit.¹ Nowadays, many Korean people with existential problems still visit shamans to avoid disasters and to invoke blessings.

The thought about blessings and curses is one of the strongest ideas of Korean Shamanism. Here, both the blessings and curses are entirely worldly. Blessings include wealth, health, power, and honor. Curses include disease, poverty, failure in business, etc.. In Shamanism, it is believed that blessings and curses are made by demons' whims. The demons are manipulated by shamans using special occult practices or rituals (kut).

These shamanistic elements are variously found in the spirituality and daily life of Korean Christians. Sometimes, some shamanistic elements are very effectively used by the Christian churches among the minjung with biblical teaching without serious reflection in order to attract more people. Most apparent is the excessive emphasis in sermons on the believers' earthly blessings. The Full Gospel Central Church in Seoul, which claims over 645,000 members,² for instance, uses as a church slogan 3 John verse 2: "Beloved, I

¹ "Musok, Yuksulin Sasipman," [Shamanism and fortunetellers], A16.

² Karen Hurston, Growing the World's Largest Church (Springfield, Mo.: Gospel Publishing House, 1994), 196.

wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.” The church teaches that all believers will be rich in possessions, healthy in body, and prosperous in spiritual life. This teaching became the target of much criticism in Korean churches. Nevertheless, the religious phenomena can be easily found in many Korean Christians. Shamanism is the most basic and pervasive form of Korean religiosity or spirituality which has been achieved over the centuries and bequeathed to them by their ancestors. Even though it has some negative elements, it is the historical and religious inheritance of Koreans. It may be called the religious “soil” of Korea.

In this chapter, the basic understanding of Korean Shamanism, shamanistic gods, *Mudangs* (Korean shamans), rituals (kut), shamanistic cosmology and view of soul will be discussed. In order to help understanding Korean Shamanism, we have to start with its historical background.

Historical Background

Shamanism is perhaps the most ancient and the most ubiquitous of religious phenomena in both East and West. It has often co-existed with other forms of magic, superstition and religion, so that a simple and discrete definition of its meaning and character is not easy. To compound the problem, Shamanism in Korea has usually been regarded as akin to superstition, while in Japan it was given a more respectable position as a set of public religious activities which evolved into National Shinto.³

Charles Allen Clark defines Shamanism as follows: “It is a primitive religion of

³ Chu-Kun Chang, “An Introduction to Korean Shamanism,” in Shamanism: The Spirit World of Korea, eds. Richard W. I. Guisso and Chai-shin Yu (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1988), 30.

polytheism or polydemonism with strong roots in nature worship, and generally with a supreme god over all. While the shaman exercises certain priestly functions, his main powers are connected with healing and divination.”⁴

According to Mircea Eliade, Shamanism in the strict sense is preeminently a religious phenomenon of Siberia and Central Asia. The word comes to us, through the Russian, from the Tungusic *Saman* which is the name for priest. Throughout the immense area comprising the central and northern regions of Asia, the magico-religious life of society centers on the shaman. This, of course, does not mean that she is the one and only manipulator of the sacred, nor that religious activity is completely usurped by her.⁵ In many tribes the sacrificing priest coexists with the shaman, not to mention the fact that every head of a family is also the head of the domestic cult. Nevertheless, the shaman remains the dominant figure, for throughout the vast area of Asia in which the ecstatic experience is considered the religious experience par excellence, the shaman, and she alone, is the great master of ecstasy. A first definition of the complex phenomenon of shamanism, and perhaps the least hazardous, is that it is a technique of ecstasy⁶.

It is not easy to determine the origin of Korean Shamanism: it may include southern elements, for example that of Manchuria or Mongolia. There have been profound modifications caused by contact with the more developed religions such as Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism, and the influence has been to some extent reciprocal.

⁴ Charles Allen Clark, Religions of Old Korea (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1932), 173.

⁵ Since most shamans are women (nowdays), it would be appropriate to use female pronouns when referring to shamans of unknown gender.

⁶ Mircea Eliade, Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy, trans. Willard R. Trask, rev. ed. (New York: Bollingen Foundation, 1964), 4.

According to Chu-Kun Chang, it is generally conceded that Shamanism existed in the Korean peninsula well before the tenth century B.C., and archeological evidence in fact suggests that it was part of the Bronze Age culture. Just as is the case today in remote areas of the countryside, shamanistic ceremonies to propitiate local gods of field and forest were held, and though in ancient times both sexes served as shaman, today females invariably fill this role.⁷

The first historical report of Korean Shamanism is found in ancient books, such as *Samguk Sagi* (histories of the three ancient kingdoms: Koguryo, Paekche and Silla; A.D. 1145) and *Samguk Yusa* (similar to the above, A.D. 1280).⁸ These books contain many myths which are related to shamanistic tradition. Dong Shik Ryu, who is a professor at Yonsei University in Korea, explains the origin of Korean Shamanism, relating it to the founders of the three kingdoms in the book *Samguk Yusa*.⁹ *Samguk Yusa* has six myths of the founder of the kingdom: Tankoon, Chumong, Hyukese, Kimalgi, Talhae, and Sooro. Especially, Tankoon myth is an important resource to understand Korean Shamanism. Tankoon, the founder of Ancient Chosun, in 2332 B.C., is generally referred to as a man of deity, or a fairy, and was the first one to appear as a saint of Korean Shamanism in the history of Korea. The word Tankoon implies *Tankul*, meaning the sorcerer who healed the sick, the distressed, and governed the people with the will of god. Tankoon was simply a great shaman, and his worship on the great

⁷ Chang, 30-31.

⁸ Tradition stretches Korean history back to 2333 B.C., but fixed dates are shadowy until the time of the three kingdoms (57 B.C. to A.D. 668).

⁹ Dong Shik Ryu, *Hankuk Mukyoui Yoksawakujo* (The history and the structure of Korean Shamanism) (Seoul: Yonsei Univ., 1983), 27-56.

altar of Kanghwa was simply a shamanistic performance.¹⁰

One of the ancient nations in Korea, Silla, which existed from the fifth to the tenth centuries, also has a shamanistic tradition. We find in the *Samguk Sagi* that the second king of Silla was named *Namhae Kosogan*. The *Kosogan* was also *Cha Cha Ung*. Kim Tae-Mun, an eighth-century Silla scholar commenting on the passage, suggested that, “in the national [Korean] language, “*Cha Cha Ung*” means Shaman.”¹¹

According to the literary evidence, it is very clear that sacerdotal functions are integral to ancient kingship. One of the best-known of these concerns the attack on Koguryo by T'ang emperor T'ai-tsung in A.D. 646, the fourth year of King Pojang. In this incident, the Chinese, with their vast numerical superiority, were repulsed in their attack on the fortress of Yodong after a shaman prophesied to king Pojang that the fortress would be saved if the proper rituals were dedicated to Chumong, the reputed founder of the kingdom. The Chinese defeat was attributed to Chumong's intervention and the shamanistic character of the ruler could no doubt be viewed as a source of unity and resolve among his people.¹²

During the Koryo period (A.D. 918-1392), there arose the first recorded opposition to Shamanism. This was due largely to the rising influence of Confucianism, particularly in court circles. Especially as the Chinese examination system, with its wholly Confucian curriculum, became the requisite for appointment to civil office, successful

¹⁰ Charles Allen Clark, 176.

¹¹ Chang, 31.

¹² Ibid., 31.

scholars began to criticize what they regarded as excessive shamanistic influence upon the women of the palace-both queens and princesses. One of the best-known Confucian scholars of his time, Yi Kyu-bo(1168-1241), wrote a long poem, "The Story of an Old Female Shaman," being delighted at expulsion of an old female shaman from the city. In his poem, he criticizes shamanistic rituals and tradition as a foolish superstition and urges people to throw away shamanistic traditions.¹³

In spite of the contempt for shamanism among the rationalistic Confucian scholars, Shamanism seems to have harmonized well with Buddhism which became something of a state religion during the Koryo period. The Koryo has two important Buddhist rituals which originated in Silla. They are *P'algwanhoe* (ritual in honor of the celestial king and five famous mountains and rivers) and *Yundeunghoe* (the Lantern Festival). The *P'algwanhoe* is a ritual through which lay-people practice the eight precepts for twenty-four hours and take a vow : (1) not to destroy life; (2) not to steal; (3) to abstain from impurity; (4) not to lie; (5) to abstain from intoxicating drinks, which hinder progress and virtue; (6) not to use a high or broad bed; (7) to abstain from dancing, singing, music and stage plays; (8) not to eat at forbidden times.¹⁴ In short, *P'algwanhoe* is a strong training retreat through which lay-people keep eight self-restraint precepts and cultivate their mind. However, the *P'algwanhoe* was practically held, it was neither religious nor ascetic. Rather, it was an assembly for the peace and security of the country and was held with singing, dancing, and drinking wine. As it were, *P'algwanhoe* was a Buddhistic

¹³ Dong Shik Ryu, Hankuk Mukyoui Yoksawakujo, 155-57.

¹⁴ Ibid., 133.

ritual which was deeply influenced by the shamanistic tradition which influenced the society and culture of the ancient Korean people. *Yundeunghoe* (The lantern Festival) is also a typical Buddhist ritual which praises the virtue of Sakya Muni. This was observed as an important national function through the entire reigns of Koryo with the *P'algwanhoe*. The offering services in honor of Buddha were performed by the Imperial Palace and every local town. *Yundeunghoe*'s situation is similar to *P'algwanhoe*. *Yundeunghoe* is surely a Buddhist ritual. However, it is syncretized to Shamanism. For example, there were prayers for peace and security for the state and the royal households, and the foods and refreshment provided were shared in merriment by both the government officials and the people.¹⁵

However, with the founding of the Yi dynasty in 1392, the situation changed. Confucianism became the ideology by which the Yi dynasty ruled the whole society. The observance of primitive Shamanism, due to the unification of religion and state, was not able to continue under the Confucian state. Eventually the freedom of mobility of shamans was restricted as they were forbidden access to the capital and prevented from carrying out ceremonies and rituals out-of-doors. During the Yi dynasty, Shamanism was less widely practiced than before at all level of society, but it was certainly not eradicated from people's minds. Instead, the quality of shamanistic observance declined: partly because of the influence of the uneducated women who were the chief practitioners, and partly because the religion itself was regarded as little more than superstition and

¹⁵ Ibid., 139-40.

occupied the status almost of an outlawed doctrine.¹⁶

Throughout history, Shamanism has deeply interacted with the imported religions, Buddhism and Confucianism. Religious leaders of Buddhism and Confucianism neglected shamanistic tradition and persecuted shamans. However, Korean Shamanism did not disappear, rather it has deeply influenced the ritual of other religions.

Christianity in Korea also struggles with Shamanistic influence. When the Protestant missionaries brought Christianity to Korea, they treated other religions as evils. They forced Korean Christians to throw out not only other religions, but also the Korean traditional culture. Especially, they were universally cognizant of the power of Shamanism among the Korean masses, and portrayed its beliefs as primitive and superstitious, and as a barrier to modernization. Nevertheless, shamanistic influence is variously found in the spirituality and daily life of Korean Christians. Blessing centered faith, miracle-centered faith, excessive mysticism and the strong expectation of the charismatic power of religious leaders are representative examples originated in shamanistic spirituality. As Korea modernizes today, this attitude has not entirely disappeared, but the shamanistic tradition still is closely woven into the fabric of Korean life and is even now a determinant of the Korean world-view, as well as its family and social customs at all societal levels.

Characteristics of Korean Shamanism

Shamanism is not only found in Korea. It is found in essence in other parts of the world, as for example, in the case of the Voodoo doctors in Africa and the witch

¹⁶ Chang, 32-33.

doctors of Ceylon. It is more particularly the form of religion or religion magic practiced by the aborigines of northern Asia. Especially the Shamanism in Manchuria, Mongolia and Japan has been profoundly modified by contact with the more developed religions such as Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism, and its influence has been to some extent reciprocal. The Shamanism of Korea is without doubt a product of those contacts. In order to understand characteristics of Korean Shamanism, first of all, we need to understand three major elements of Korean Shamanism: shamanistic gods, *Kut* (Shamanistic ritual), and the shaman.

An Understanding of the Concept of Shamanistic Gods

Without examining the concept of god in Korean Shamanism, we can not understand the deep structure of the Korean world view and religiosity because this conception has overwhelmingly dominated Korean history and society.

The concept of divine being in Korean shamanism is similar to that in animism, pantheism, and polytheism. In the earliest times, the people were so struck with horror and wonderment at the mysteries of nature that they believed there was spirit and life in almost every strange thing. Seeing the bright sparkling sun, stars, moon, or high mountains that stretch out toward heaven, or a steadily flowing river, or a torrential rain pouring at one time, they thought there unmistakably was a certain vitality or spirit in all these things. Such ideas were later changed and names were assigned to certain objects.

The Korean understanding of gods is very strange to Western people. In Western culture, dominated as it has been by the Jewish and the Christian traditions, the word or symbol "God" has generally referred to one, supreme, or holy being, the unity of ultimate

reality and ultimate goodness. So conceived, God is believed to have created the entire universe, to rule over it, and to intend to bring it to its fulfillment or realization, to “save” it. God is the center and sole object of religious existence, commitment, devotion, dependence, fear, trust, love and belief--and the center of worship, prayer, and religious meditation.¹⁷ Korea has many worshipped spirits. Charles Allen Clark said, “Korea is a land of demons.”¹⁸ He classified gods worshipped in Korean Shamanism by six classes: The spirits of the Heavens, or of the Air; the spirit of the Soil; Water Spirits; House-gods; Spirits in Trees; and Free-Lance Spirits.¹⁹ Each of these in his own territory is supreme and each controls a mighty spirit host which does his bidding.

According to Tae Gon Kim, there are 22 natural gods and 11 human gods, making a total of 33 kinds.²⁰ If we look at the proportion of gods in a systematic classification, we can recognize that gods from historical or realistic life are first worshipped. For example, in the case of nature gods, the order of gods is soil, water, mountain and heaven. In the case of human gods, the number of *Changkoonsin* (the General god or here “god”) or *Wangsin* (King-god) are more than that of the Buddhistic gods or the Taoistic gods. That is to say, shamanistic belief focuses on practical or realistic problems which are related to life and death, or fortune and misfortune.

The unique thing about Korean Shamanism is its conception of one Supreme God.

¹⁷ Langdon Gilkey, “God,” in *Christian Theology*, eds. Peter C. Hodgson and Robert H. King (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 89-90.

¹⁸ Charles Allen Clark, 194.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 195-209.

²⁰ Tae Gon Kim, *Hankukui Musok* [Korean Shamanism] (Seoul: Daewonsa, 1993), 56.

Korean people believe that there are many gods in the hierarchy, but there is only one supreme God who reigns over all of the world. His name is Hananim. According to Clark, his name has been variously translated as "Honorable Heaven," or "sky Master," or "Great One." However it is translated, it means "Supreme god over all."²¹ Hananim is unique. There is scarcely a question that he goes far back into the dim ages of Korean history long before any of the foreign religions came into the country. It was Hananim whom Tankoon, the founder of ancient Chosun, worshipped on his high altar on Kanghwa. Korean people usually think that Hananim is entirely separated from and outside of the circle of the various spirits and demons that infest all nature. The supremacy of Hananim is apparently acknowledged alike by Confucianists, Buddhists and Shamanists. In times of mortal danger, almost the first cry of the Korean is to Hananim. Koreans universally say that Hananim sends the harvest, that he sends the rain, that by his grace we live and breathe. The Rain Bringing Ceremonies of Confucianism are addressed to Hananim, not to *Sangchei*, or any other of the Chinese names. Even though Korean shamanistic tradition has many worshipped gods, it has the concept of one Supreme god, Hananim, which could be considered a primitive monotheism.²² Early Korean Missionaries accepted this term, "Hananim" for conveying the biblical meaning of God. So, in this sense, this term was contextualized into biblical terminology and God was called Hananim. It is not difficult for Koreans with the conception of Hananim to believe in the biblical God who is the one, Supreme, holy being, and rules

²¹ Charles Allen Clark, 195.

²² Ibid., 195-97.

over the world, and is the object of fear, trust, and belief.

An Understanding of Mudang (Korean Shaman)

The understanding of the role of the Mudang is the key to understanding the whole structure of Korean Shamanism. "Mudang" in the Korean language is the general term for shaman, although perhaps a majority of them do not call themselves Mudang, but *mumyo*, *mansin*, *miji*, *tan'gol*, *timbang*, *hwaraengi* or yet other names.²³ Both in daily usage in Korean and in academic treatises, however, these people are commonly called Mudang. Not only does the word Mudang originally refer to women, most of the religious mediators of this kind are female, and therefore Mudang generally means female shaman. Male Mudangs often are called *Paksu* or *Paksu Mudang*.

Types of Korean Shamans and their regional distribution. In Siberia, there are various classifications of shamans, for example, the family shamans who serve only on occasion either in their own households, or in the communal rites of the villages, and the professional ones, who do nothing else. Then there are the Black shamans, who do their work with the help of the evil spirits, and the white, who cultivate the good. Then there are the Great, the Middling and the Little shamans, the male and female shaman, etc..²⁴

According to Tae Gon Kim,²⁵ there are four types of shamans in Korea: (1) Mudang (female shaman), (2) Tan'gol (shaman who inherits priestly authority through

²³ Boudewijn Walraven, Songs of the Shaman: The Ritual Chants of the Korean Mudang (London: Kegan Paul, 1994), 1.

²⁴ Charles Allen Clark, 181.

²⁵ Tae Gon Kim, "Regional Characteristics of Korean Shamanism," 120.

the family), (3) Simbang (name for Shamans on Cheju Island, also priest of a shrine usually in divination), (4) My o'ngdu (Spirit of female child that possesses shaman).

1. Mudang. In the Mudang type, one becomes a shaman through a process called *Kang-sin Ch'e-ho'm*, which means "experiencing a descent of the shaman spirit," which often follows a serious illness. The Mudang may officiate at ritualistic occasions with songs and dances, and is able to tell fortunes through the spiritual power of a deity. Along with the *Paksu* (the male shaman) and the so-called *Son'Mudangs* such as *Posal*, *Ch'lsong halmom*, *Popsa*, the Mudang-type can be found both in central and northern Korea. Although the *Son-mudangs* have spiritual power acquired through *Kang-sin ch'-hom* they are shamans of lower rank who can not perform rituals with a complete knowledge of song and dance. Their function is restricted to performing "pison," simple rituals and fortune-telling. Their range may sometimes extend into southern Korea and Cheju Island.²⁶ The characteristics of the Mudang-type are as follow:

- a. They experience a descent of the shaman spirit and possession of spiritual power.
- b. They have a shrine for the descending spirit.
- c. They believe firmly in the reality of the spirit.
- d. They can officiate a legitimate ritual with dancing and songs.
- e. They tell fortunes by spiritual power.²⁷

2. Tan'gol. The Tan'gol-type shaman is created by inheriting "*Sajegwon*" (priestly authority), which means the authority of officiating at rituals, and this is passed from

²⁶ Ibid., 120.

²⁷ Tae Gon Kim, *Hankukui Musok*, 12.

generation to generation. Certain jurisdictional areas, based on shamanistic traditions and the priesthood controlling them, are transferred according to institutionalized descent. The Tan'gol in Honam region and the Mudang of Yongnam region are of this type. The Tan'gol has a certain jurisdiction of her own, which is called "*Tan'gol Pan*" and which establishes the collective relationship of the shamanistic followers within that jurisdiction.²⁸

3. Simbang. The Simbang-type, like the Tan'gol-type, is a hereditary shaman who inherits Sajegwon. The Simbang, found on Cheju Island, show an institutionalized aspect of shamanistic tradition and an established view of the gods emphasizing spiritual power. In this, they differ from the Tangol-type who lack any conscious faith in the gods. They differ, too, from the Mudang-type since they seek the god's will through divination rather than by being directly possessed by the spirit of the god. The Simbang-type is distinct from both the Tan'gol and the Mudang-types, and may be seen as occupying the middle position between the two. However being unable to directly receive the oracle of the god, and having their major function in officiating at rituals, they are more closely related to the Tan'gol-type.²⁹

4. Myongdu. The Myongdu-type of shaman originates from *Kangsin Ch'e hom*, which means receiving the spirit of a dead person. The spirit possessing the shaman is that of a dead person, usually under the age of seven, occasionally near the age of sixteen, with some claim to kinship with the shaman. The spirit of the dead child is enshrined in

²⁸ Tae Gon Kim, "Regional Characteristics of Korean Shamanism," 121.

²⁹ Ibid., 121.

the family shrine and is called for by the shaman to divine the future. The spirit of a female child is called "*Myongdu*" and that of a male child "*Tongja*" or "*Taeju*". The shaman is called by the same name as that of the spirit possessing her. This type of shaman is found mostly in the Honam region and also in central and northern Korea. The Myongdu shamans used to specialize in divination but have lately taken to officiating at rituals, thereby coming into conflict with the Tan'gol shaman.³⁰

Apart from categorizing the shamans of Korea into Mudang, Tangol, Simbang, and Myongdu types, they can be further classified into two distinct categories: the Mudang and Myongdu types as "Kangsin shamans" (Charismatic) and the Tan'gol and Simbang types as hereditary shamans (Priestly). The Kangsin shamans are found largely in central and northern Korea, while the hereditary shamans are confined mainly to the southern part of the country.

The process of becoming a Shaman. Shamanism is founded on a special technique for achieving ecstasy by means of which the shaman enters an altered state of consciousness, and on the idea that the shaman is accompanied by helping spirits who assist her in this state. While in a state of trance, the shaman is capable of direct communication with representatives of the otherworld. She is able to help her fellow mortals in crises believed to be caused by the spirits and to act as a concrete mediator between this world and the other world in accompanying a soul to the other world, or fetching it from the domain of the spirits. Through the technique of ecstasy, the shaman acts as a healer, diviner, or guardian of livelihood.

³⁰ Ibid., 121.

The power by means of which the shaman can do mystical works is related to her ecstatic initiation. According to Eliade, relating their ecstatic initiations, the Siberian shamans maintain that they die and lie inanimate for from three to seven days in their yurts or solitary places. During this time, they are cut up by demons or by their ancestral spirits; their bones are cleaned, the flesh scraped off, the body fluids thrown away, and their eyes torn from their sockets. Through this process the shaman learns what she must do when her soul abandons the body and, first of all, how to orient herself in the unknown regions that she enters during her ecstasy. She learns to explore the new planes of existence disclosed by her ecstatic experiences. She knows the road to the center of the world. In short, she knows the paths that lead to Heaven and Hell. The future shaman experience the world of spirit and obtains the power of healing or divination. Generally, this ecstatic type of experience is always and everywhere followed by theoretical and practical instruction at the hands of the old masters. The future shaman experiences the ecstasy of suffering, death and resurrection through this terrible initiation.³¹

The process of becoming a shaman in Korea is similar. The central and northern parts of Korea are generally the homes of *Kangsin* shamans (Charismatic shamans and possessed shamans). They become *Kangsin* shaman through the *Sinbyung* (the shaman's disease, the mystic illness in the process of becoming a shaman). The period of illness is long, from an average of eight years to a maximum of thirty. No medical treatment is possible and the illness is believed to be cured only by *Kangsin Che*, or "the

³¹ Eliade, Shamanism, 33.

ritual of the advent of the god.” It is believed that the only way to escape the affliction is to become a shaman following the fate revealed by the god.³²

While suffering from such an illness, the afflicted person will go to fortune-tellers to seek its cause and how best to remedy it. If the symptoms prove to be a *sinbyoung* (shaman’s illness) by the shaman or fortune-teller, she must conduct a so-called *naerim-kut* (the ritual for enshrining the god in the body of the future shaman) to enshrine the god who has descended into her body. A *naerim-kut* will be conducted by a prominent shaman, and she will enshrine the god in the *kangsinja* (the person who is possessed with the god’s spirit). This is called *songmu-uisik* or the ritual of becoming a shaman. The future shaman is supposed to tell the name of the god by whom she is possessed at the ritual by picking up one of the bowls on the table of the names of the gods. After that the *Kangsinja* (the possessed) will jump up and dance violently. It is at this moment that she changes from human to divine and leaves the secular world to enter the divine one; she becomes a shaman with the authority of the god possessing her. Mysterious illness, dreaming, hallucinations and wanderings all symbolize the death of her secular being, and *naerim-kut* symbolizes her rebirth as a divine entity.³³

The possessed shaman has a clear view of god, for she experiences the god through her own ecstasy. She sets up an altar at her home with a painting of the god on a shelf below it. If a painting is not available, then the name of the god written on a piece of paper is acceptable until she can obtain a proper painting.

³² Tae Gon Kim, Hankuk Musok Yunku [The study of Korean Shamanism] (Seoul: Gyupmundang, 1981), 194-96.

³³ Tae Gon Kim, “Regional Characteristics of Korean Shamanism,” 122-23.

The process of becoming a shaman in southern Korean is different. The shamans of southern Korea are mainly hereditary ones whose status is transferred through descent from generation to generation. The authority to officiate at shamanistic rituals is inherited through the paternal line and the woman who marries the possessor of the authority to officiate will become a shaman in her own right. This marriage is called *mugyehon*, that is, a marriage between two shaman families.³⁴

The hereditary shaman, unlike the *Kangsin* (charismatic) shaman who has *Kangsin Chehom* (spirit possession), seems to have a very weak belief in the gods. The hereditary shaman does not enshrine any god in her home, having had no direct experience with one. The hereditary shaman tends to see institutional aspects of the rituals as being more important than the spiritual power of the gods because she officiates at the rituals with inherited authority and not with the spiritual possession of the possessed shaman.³⁵ No element of a belief in gods is found in the hereditary shaman's rituals; they are performed not because of religious faith but simply because they are traditionally regarded as bringing good luck.

The Shaman's functions. The shaman is an important religious specialist within the Shamanism of Korea as is common in most animism. The shaman is usually a healer, conductor of ritual, diviner, magician, and the one who escorts the souls of the dead to the other world. Mircea Eliade sees the thing that distinguishes a shaman from others in his clan to be his ecstatic experience. The guardian spirits and mythical helpers are not

³⁴ Ibid., 126.

³⁵ Ibid., 127.

specific and exclusive characteristic of Shamanism. These tutelary and helping spirits are collected almost anywhere in the entire cosmos; but through her advancement in the of techniques of ecstasy, the shaman is able to help others in dealings with the spirit world.³⁶ The shaman is able to control the time and manner of her ecstatic experience so that it performs a religious and social function.

Korean shaman has some religious functions. According to the material of the history of Koryo dynasty, Korean shaman has five religious and social functions: the function as a priest, the function as a healer, the function as a fortuneteller, the function of imprecation through an evil spirit, the function of spiritual communication through singing and dancing.³⁷

The main functions of a shaman are to cause blessings, to tell fortunes and protect from misfortune. The shaman as a priest offers religious worship to gods for an individual or community and conveys the divine will to the people.

The function as a healer is one of the most basic functions of a shaman. In the ancient society of Korea and China *Mu*, the shaman, and *Eui*, the healer, had not yet been separated. The *Mudang* was closely related to the royal courts because of the therapeutic function of *Kut*. Among the common people as well, the shaman functioned as a healer of diseases.³⁸

The shaman as a prophet foresees mischief or good things. Some shamans practice

³⁶ Eliade, Shamanism, 107.

³⁷ Dong Shik Ryu, Hankuk Mukyoui Yoksawakujo, 151-54.

³⁸ Kil Sung Choi, Hankuk Musokui Yunku [A study of the Korean Shamanism] (Seoul: Asia Press, 1980), 129.

fortunetelling or divination in their home and do not attempt to put on a lengthy kut. Others use some forms of divination as a part of a long ritual which is primarily dancing. All these divinations are based on the caprice or the feelings of spirits at the time a question is asked or expected.

The functions as a priest, a healer, and a fortuneteller are originated in an ancient era. However, the function of imprecation through an evil spirit was begun at the age of the decline of the Koryo dynasty.³⁹ This is to curse an opponent by use of an evil spirit or mystical ritual.

Singing and dancing are an important method of communicating with god-spirits. This dancing and singing of shamans gradually developed into one part of Korean traditional culture.

The Understanding of Kut

The Kut is the shaman's religious ritual through which she can communicate with divine spirits. The Kut is performed when a family, a village or all the country is faced with an unfortunate event. When disease, natural disaster, accident, or death has occurred, or when the danger of such is imminent, a Kut is performed. While performing the kut, people with shamanistic ideas believe that their terrible problems can be solved by exorcising the evil spirits or taking care of the ancestor spirits and the deceased. In other words, the Kut has both curative and preventative functions.⁴⁰ The Kut, the traditional nature-oriented religious rites, is classified according to scale *pison*, *P'udakkori*, and

³⁹ Dong Shik Ryu, Hankuk Mukyoui Yoksawakujjo, 153.

⁴⁰ Kwangil Kim, "Kut and the Treatment of Mental Disorders," in Shamanism: The Spirit World of Korea, 132.

greater Kut. *Pison* is performed in a very short period of time and can be performed by ordinary women other than shamans. *P'udakkori* is performed by either a shaman or a fortune-teller and takes three or four hours, the performer personally playing musical instruments and chanting song in a recitation tone. Greater Kut is performed by shamans with musicians playing a variety of instruments while the shaman performs songs and dances. A greater Kut usually last from one to several days. There are various kind of greater Kut, depending upon the objective and the occasion, but the predominant forms are family rites for the peace and health of the family, ward rites for the peace and health of the inhabitants of a neighborhood, and memorial service for the dead.⁴¹

According to Chung Hee Lee, the traditional Kut can be classified as an individual or a village Kut, depending on the subject or character of the ritual. In the category of individual Kut, there are basically three kinds: one that seeks the cure of illness, one that ask for blessings upon a family, and one that serves as an initiation rite or as ritual on behalf of victims of unjust death.⁴² Unlike the individual Kut, the village Kut differs according to the region in which it is performed. In every village Kut, the subjects are generally all residents of the village, and the Kut is directly linked to the community life of a given region. There are two types of village Kut. The first type is performed by a shaman and calls for the participation of all the village residents in the sacred place. The second is performed by the *nong-ak* band which is composed of Korean traditional

⁴¹ Seung Nam Kim, A Contribution of Korean Traditional Theater to Liturgical Expression, D. Min. Project, School of Theology at Claremont, 1992 (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1993), 38.

⁴² Chung Hee Lee, "Liberation Spirituality in Dae-dong kut" in Asian Christian Spirituality: Reclaiming Traditions, eds. Virginia Fabella, Peter K. H. Lee, and David Kwang-sun Suh (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1992), 37.

instruments: *Jangku* (a double-headed drum pinched in at the middle), *Buk* (drum), a gong, a small gong, and so on.. The *nong-ak band* visits all houses in the village to eliminate evil fortunes and supplicate blessings on the house. At either Kut, the village residents select as the leader someone in the village whose family has not been subjected to misfortune or unlucky omens.⁴³

The sacred symbol of the village is often a tree or stone, although some shrines are erected in the mountains. The trees considered sacred are often old trees in the village. During the performance of Kut, one tree is selected as the sacred tree possessing the spirit. It is cut and erected in the area where the Kut is to take place. At that precise moment, the area is transformed into a sacred place.⁴⁴

In order to understand the whole of Kut, we need to classify Kut according to the purpose and contents of Kut. Generally, Kut in Korean Shamanism can be classified into three categories: *Kibokje* ("service for blessing"), *Chibyeungje* ("service for healing") and *Salyeungje* ("service for the dead").⁴⁵

Kibokje is a religious ritual for protection and blessing of family, village and the state. It covers problems about protection, blessing, a good harvest, marriage, safe delivery, etc..

Chibyeungje is a religious ritual for healing. It heals the sick in the family by exorcising the evil spirits.

⁴³ Ibid., 38.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 38.

⁴⁵ Dong Shik Ryu, *Hankuk Mukyoui Yoksawakujo*, 293.

Salyungje is a religious ritual for the dead. According to shamanistic tradition, souls of human beings can be classified into dead souls and live souls. Dead souls are classified into ancestral souls and wrath souls. The former is the good soul of a person who had lived a normal life while the latter is the evil soul of a person who had died leaving wrath and curses behind and who is groping for the entrance to the other world. This Kut is a ritual to comfort the soul of the dead and to send it to the good world.

Here we can find that Korean Shamanism is basically a family-centered religion that conserves the welfare of the family by exorcising the evil spirits, healing the sick in the family, and taking care of the ancestor spirits and the deceased.

Even though Korean shamanistic Kuts have many kinds of rituals, generally the basic form is composed of twelve *gori* (order of the ritual). A list of the parts of regular Kut is as follows:

1. *Pujong-gori*, purifying the altar, the opening ceremony. *Pujong* means “uncleanliness.” The purpose of this part is to get rid of all kinds of unclean spirits which might spoil the following parts of the Kut.

2. *Kamang-gori*. *Kamang* are a class of ancestral gods of a rather uncertain nature. *Kamang* refers to gods revered as founders of Shamanism.

3. *San-mamura* is another name for the mountain god. This is a prayer to the mountain god for protection.

4. *Pyolsang-gori* is a prayer to the spirit of small pox for expulsion of the disease.

5. *Taegam-gori*. *Taegam* originally was an appellation of government officials. The shaman use this word as a suffix to the names of a whole group of gods, but also separately for gods of this class.

6. *Chesok-gori*. Chesok is the god of birth. The name is borrowed from Buddhism.

7. *Chomwang gori* is devoted to the heavenly kings of Buddhism who assist as guardians of the Dharma. It is actually an appendix to the preceding part and not often found separately.

8. *Hogu gori*. *Hogu* are the souls of girls who were sent to China during the period of Mongol domination in 13th and 14th century, as part of the tribute Korea had to pay.

9. *Kumung gori*. *Kumung* are deified warriors. Many of the gods of the Mudang are represented as fierce warriors, branching swords and halberds.

10. *Changbu gori*. *Changbu* means actor or husband of a Mudang(shaman). These husbands often act as assistant to their wives. This is a prayer to the deity of dead *Changbu* for protection from accident.

11. *Malmyoung gori*. *Malmyoung* are deified Mudang of the past or ancestor spirits in general.

12. *Twitchon gori* is a ritual for a variety of less important gods and ghosts.⁴⁶

As we see, the basic form of Kut is composed of twelve *gori* (rites). *Pudakkori* which is composed of four *gori* is a simplified ritual for healing. General Kut has twelve *gori*. Each *gori* invokes a specific god and performs an independent Kut for the god.

⁴⁶ Walraven, 7-9.

During the twelve *gori*, almost all of Shamanistic gods are invoked and are worshipped by the shaman with dancing, singing, story telling, and affluent sacrificial offering.

Shamanistic Cosmology

The preeminent shamanistic technique is the passage from one cosmic region to another--from earth to the sky or from earth to the underworld. The shaman knows the mystery of how to break through. This communication among the cosmic zones is made possible by the very structure of the universe. According to Mircea Eliade, the universe expressed in Shamanism is conceived as having three levels--sky, earth, under world--connected by a central axis. The symbolism employed to express the interconnection and intercommunication among the three cosmic zones is quite complex and not without contradictions.⁴⁷

In the sky, sky-god, sun-god, moon-god, star-gods and their chamberlains live and control the whole creation of the cosmos. In earth, human beings, animals, mountain-gods, general nature-gods live together. In under world, the dead spirits and myoung busin (the god to control the dead-spirits live together).⁴⁸ The world of sky is the paradise for which human beings always yearn. There is no more death or disease or mourning or pain. The weather is not cold or hot, but beautiful and comfortable. After human beings die, they go to the under world. The under world is divided into Hades and paradise, which is the eternal world for the good spirits. They don't know exactly where

⁴⁷ Eliade, Shamanism, 259.

⁴⁸ Tae Gon Kim, Hankukui Musok, 70.

paradise is among the three levels. However, Hades is obviously located in the underworld.⁴⁹ Because a shaman knows the mystery of the three levels of the universe, she can lead a spirit to another world.

Shamanistic View of Soul

The concept of the soul is the basic question concerning the existence of man not only in a shaman's world but also in the thinking of most ancient people and even today among many modern religions.

In Shamanism a human being is regarded as a bipolar combination of the flesh and soul; the latter being the motor of life for the former. The soul is a shapeless power which constitutes the sources of human life. The state of the flesh without the soul is considered death. Human life itself is believed to be sustained by the soul. Even after the death of a man, the soul is regarded as an immortal power that can move into another person for a rebirth on the world or live perpetually in the other world after death.⁵⁰

Souls in Korean Shamanism can be classified for the sake of conveniences into dead souls and live souls. The former is the one that goes to the other world after death. The latter is the one residing in the flesh of a living person. There are many kinds of stories about the soul in the common people's world. For example, one belief is that a dream is something seen by the soul leaving the flesh while one is sleeping. Another belief is that if someone paints a black mustache on the face of a sleeping man or covers the face with cloth or paper, the soul that has left the flesh, in its return to the flesh after floating

⁴⁹ Ibid., 71.

⁵⁰ Tae Gon Kim, "Shaman's Spiritual Value Judgment," in Custom and Manners in Korea, ed. Shin-Yong Chun (Seoul: International Cultural Foundation, 1980), 91.

around, cannot recognize the face and enters somebody else's flesh resulting in the death of the man so mistaken. Another belief is that the weakening of consciousness in the state of coma or serious sickness is derived from the soul's preparing to leave flesh. All these beliefs commonly held by Koreans validate the existence of the soul in the flesh.⁵¹

Dead souls are classified into the ancestral souls and the wrath souls. The former are the good souls of people who lived a normal life while the latter are the evil souls of people who had died leaving wrath and curses behind and who are groping for the entrance to the other world. The former are the ancestors of the common people and the shaman's *Daeshin* and *Man-Ryoung*; the latter includes *Young-san*, *Soo-bi*, which are both evil souls. These evil souls emanate from those unmarried young ones who met tragic deaths while traveling. They float around in the earthy world unable to proceed to the other world because of unfinished revenges to rectify their sorrows. Generally the souls stay in the earthly world during the periods of funeral, the first, second and third anniversaries of the death and depart for the other world at the end of three years. However, the evil souls unable to leave for the other world even after the end of three years haunt and burden living people until they satisfy their revenge. *Jin-oh-gi Kut*, *Oh-gu-kut*, and *Shi-kum-kut* are all Kut intended to appease these evil souls by clearing their grievances so as to help them enter the other world.⁵²

The soul in Korean Shamanism is regarded as having the same character as a living person does. And as such, they are treated accordingly in shaman rituals. Their forms

⁵¹ Ibid., 93.

⁵² Ibid., 93.

are only conceivable as living persons in dreams or in images. However, during ordinary days they are represented by forms such as formless air or breathing and are not even in a conceivable image. The souls are believed to be omnipresent eternal beings that can freely float around in the air without any restraints from time or space. They cannot, however, freely communicate with living persons during ordinary days except through dreams or imaginations. Judging from this, the soul seems to appear in a condition aspiring for eternity for the existence of humanity. We can see that the forms and characters of the souls are classified into (1) "devoid of the flesh," (2) "formless omnipotence," and (3) "immortality." The following are analyses of these characteristics.⁵³

1. "Devoid of the flesh." The soul escaping from the visible existence of the flesh causes the death of the flesh. However, the soul, regardless of the death of the flesh, exists in forms such as (2) and (3) above.

2. "A formless omnipotence." The soul is formless and exists as an invisible entity transcending the spatiality of the present world.

3. "An Immortal." The soul is an entity unbound by time of the present world and exists as an eternal being. The above characteristics of the soul are perceived as the basis of the existence of the flesh in the present world.

⁵³ Ibid., 95.

Chapter Summary

Shamanism did not survive through any organized education, but flowed as a stream, as a form of culture. Neither did one find formal training institutions for the religious leaders, nor did one find any text book for shamanism. Nevertheless, shamanistic beliefs and ritual has been transmitted without a big modification.

The concept of divine being in Shamanism tends to be similar to that in animism, pantheism, and polytheism. There are many gods, with no strict order of authority among the gods. However, the unique thing about Korean Shamanism is its conception of one Supreme god. His name is *Hananim*, which means “Supreme god over all.” Early Korean Missionaries accepted this term, “*Hananim*” to convey the biblical meaning of God.

Mudang is a Korean word that indicates a person who is the central figure of Mukyo (Shamanism). The centrality of the *mudang* is derived from the spiritual power that enables her to be the intermediary between the world of spirits and the world of human beings during the performance of kuts. Korean shamans can be classified into two distinct categories: the *Mudang* and *Myoungdu* types, as *Kangsin* shaman (Charismatic) and the *Tangol* and *Simbang* types as hereditary shamans (Priestly). The *Kangsin* shamans are found largely in central and northern Korea, while the hereditary shamans are confined mainly to the southern part of the country. These shamans act as mediators, healers, patrons of blessing and fertility, diviners, the guardians of livelihoods for the life, death, misfortune and blessings of human beings.

The kut is the shaman's religious ritual through which she can communicate with divine spirits. While performing the kut, people with shamanistic faith believe that their existential problems can be solved by exorcising the evil spirits or taking care of the ancestor spirits and the deceased. Kut can be classified by three methods: Scale, Character, and Goals. Following the "scale" of kut, it has been classified as *Pison*, *Pudakgori* and *kun kut*, the greater kut. Depending on the subject or "character" of the ritual, kut can be classified as an individual or a village kut. According to the "goal" of kut, Korean kut has three main goals: *kibok* (for blessings), *Chibyeung* (for healing), and *Salyeung* (for the dead).

If Shamanism was mankind's earliest religion, it has largely disappeared in most areas when they become industrialized. However, Korea is an exception. Although presently one of the leaders among the world's rapidly developing countries, Shamanism still flourishes as a religion in South Korea.

There has been no organized educational institution for Shamanism in the past. However, this situation changed recently. *Daehan Gyungshin Hyuphwa* (Korean Shaman Association) governs a shaman school which is called *Minsok bojon Hwa* (A National Association of Folk customs). For past five years, about 1000 shamans graduated from this school. Through the course of three months in the school, In-oh Park, a male shaman, teaches about 30-40 students to play traditional Korean instruments, sing and dance for the performance of kut.⁵⁴

Korean Shamanism is a living religion. According to the report of *Dae Han Gyungsin Hyuphwa* (Korean Shaman Association), about 40,000 shamans and

⁵⁴ "Musok, Yuksulin Sasipman," A16.

fortunetellers with shamanistic spirituality still show their religious power. People with shamanistic ideas, regardless of sex, age and rank, visit shamans in order to hear the teaching of shamans about life, death, birth, marriage, fortune, misfortune, healing, exorcism, and a gentle and easy death.

Chapter 3

Shamanism and its Relationship with Korean Christianity

In this chapter, I describe Shamanism and its relationship with Korean Christianity. I believe that the shamanistic background of Korean culture plays an important role in the present growth of the Korean church and in forming the spirituality of Korean Christians. Therefore, we must discuss the relationship between Shamanism and Korean Christianity. As I investigated in previous chapter, historically, Shamanism was the first major religion among Koreans, and in a sense, the most powerful in its influence on people's outlooks, culture, and even on other religions. Korean Buddhism has been shamanized in its rituals and doctrinal emphases. Though the government of the Yi Dynasty, whose policy was based on Confucian ideology, persecuted and even killed shamans, Confucianism itself has been influenced by Shamanism in its cult of ancestral worship.

As Shamanism has influenced Buddhism and Confucianism, it also has influenced Korean Christianity. Some elements of Shamanism have played an important role in the taking root and present growth of the Korean church; some examples include: enthusiastic prayer, emphasis of spiritual experience, positive involvement of women, and the religiosity for the poor, sick, and the oppressed (physically or psychologically). However, some negative elements in the Korean church are also examples of shamanistic influence: blessing-centered faith, excessive enthusiasm, miracle-centered faith, excessive demonology, and lack of ethical consciousness. The relationship between Shamanism and Korean Christianity can not be denied because both positive

elements and negative elements coexist in the relationship or interaction. These both elements must have played an important role in the present growth of the Korean Church and in the forming of Korean Christians. In this chapter, I describe shamanistic influence on the Korean church.

The Prayer of Korean Christianity and Shamanism

Theologically, prayer is one important means of grace and an essential part of Christian practice. Enthusiastic prayer is one of the most outstanding characteristics of Korean Christians. There are many types of prayers in Korean churches such as, day break prayer meeting, Friday overnight prayer meeting, Tongsung prayer (to pray together with loud voice), mountain prayer, fasting prayer, Wednesday prayer meeting, Jakjung prayer (a prayer which is practiced for a specific time and at a specific place to accomplish some purposes, for example, 100 day prayer, 40 day prayer, 21 day prayer), tongue prayer, prophesy prayer, etc.. In spite of these many practices of prayer, most Korean pastors still urge Korean Christians to prayer more zealously and Christians themselves always feel as though they do not pray enough.

Enthusiastic prayer in the Korean Church, first of all, is directly related to biblical teaching and Christian tradition. The Bible itself has many teachings of prayer.

When the people cried out to Moses, he prayed to the Lord and the fire died down.
(Num. 11:2)

For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before God of heaven.(Neh.
1:4)

Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.(Jer. 33:3)

She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. (Luke
2:37)

Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.(Mark 1:35)

One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles.(Luke 6:12-13)

The teaching of prayer in the Bible is too much to count. Fasting prayer (“Do not eat and drink for three days, night or day.” Esther 4:16), prayer for special purpose, mountain prayer, and overnight prayer are definitely traditions in the Bible.

Jesus himself was the man of prayer and asked his disciples to pray fervently (Mark 9:29, 14:38). Even when he was busily occupied with preaching and healing, he never neglect the communion with God. Before the great events of his mission there were special prayers that sometimes took most or all of the night; we may recall the prayer before the choice of the twelve (Luke 6:12-13), before the sermon on the bread of life (John 6:15), the raising of Lazarus and His own suffering and death.

All who have walked God also have viewed prayer as the main business of their lives. David’s desire for God broke the self-indulgent chain of sleep: “Early will I seek thee” (Ps. 63:1). When the apostles were tempted to invest their energies in other important and necessary tasks, they determined to give themselves continually to prayer (Acts 6:4). For those explorers in the frontier of faith, prayer was no little habit tacked onto the periphery of their life; it was their lives. It was the most serious work of their most productive years.¹

¹ Richard J. Foster, Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth, rev. ed. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), 34.

It is clear that Korean Christians learned the importance of prayer through the biblical teaching and Christian tradition. However, the inclination toward fervent prayer in Korean Christians is fundamentally related to the shamanistic religiosity of the Korean people. As it were, the biblical tradition of prayer is rooted in and wedded with the shamanistic religiosity that was already there. Especially day break prayer and mountain prayer are typical characteristics of Korean shamanism. According to Korean shamanistic tradition, many housewives pray to the heavenly god, spirit-gods, and ancestors gods for various ends. Prayer is offered at day-break in the backyard or kitchen. A bowl of clean water taken from the well is offered to the deities with the prayer. Similarly, most Korean Churches open their doors each morning at 4:30. About 10 percent of the church members attend the day break prayer meeting. This is related to one of the specific characteristics of Korean Shamanism.

The mountain prayer movement in the Korean church is also related to one of the shamanistic influences. Most big churches have their own prayer houses in a deep mountain valley. Many Christians go to the prayer mountain regularly, two or three times a year. Some stay to pray for three days, or one week. Some stay for forty days for fasting prayer.

According to Korean Shamanism, the belief in mountain gods was important to ancient Korean people. Belief in mountain gods is different from animism or nature worship. The belief is related to that of the heavenly god, hananim, who is the head of all spirits.² According to *Samkukyusa* (the ancient history of the three kingdoms of

² Dong Shik Ryu, *Hankuk Mukyoui Yoksawakujo*, 80.

Korea), about five thousand years ago Hwanwoong, the son of the heavenly god (Hwanin) descended from heaven on Mt. Taebaek. He married bear-woman and got one son, whose name is Tankoon, referred to as a man of deity or a fairy.³ Tankoon is the founder of the ancient Choson and a great shaman.⁴ The Korean people with shamanistic faith think that a specific mountain is holy in which the spirit of the heavenly god exists. When they had serious problems, they used to go to the mountain for special prayer with their shaman. Nowadays, many Korean Christians with terrible problems or serious disease go to a prayer mountain, expecting the miraculous help of God.

Over-night prayer meetings are also related to the influence of the shamanistic cult, Kut. Most Korean Churches open their door every Friday night. Some pray till midnight. Some pray all night without sleeping. Through the meeting, many Christians experience speaking tongues or mysterious spiritual experiences. According to Korean shamanistic tradition, many Kuts (shamanistic cult) are performed at night. During the overnight Kut, the shaman or her followers have their own special religious experience.

Fervent prayer is surely an important part of Christian tradition. However, before Christianity was introduced to Korea, Koreans already knew the power or importance of prayer in their spiritual life and then accepted the Christian teaching of prayer and practiced it more positively. Although Korean Christians' prayers are sometimes too selfish and self-centered, the enthusiastic prayers of Korean Christians has been a dynamic power in their spiritual life and Korean church growth.

³ Ibid., 28-29.

⁴ Charles Allen Clark, 176.

The Holy Spirit Movement and Shamanism

The Holy Spirit movement is one of the most important factors which has influenced the establishment and growth of the Korean church. From the beginning of the Korean mission, there were two kinds of stream, Holy Spirit movement focused on individual salvation and the social salvation movement for social reformation and liberation from Japan.

Protestant missions to Korea began in 1884 when Dr. Horace N. Allen was transferred from the Presbyterian Mission in China. To gain access to Korea, he came not as a missionary but as a physician to the U.S. Legation in Seoul. In 1885 missionary work began in earnest with Horace G. Underwood and Henry G. Appenzeller, Presbyterian and Methodist.⁵

The missionaries who came to Korea not only preached the Gospel but also endeavored to be more faithful, and the revival meeting of the missionaries at Wonsan in December 1903 proved a great initiative in raising Korean churches. The revival meeting was held in December of 1903 by the Presbyterian, Methodist, and Baptist missionaries at Changiun church, Wonsan, and the participants experienced the Holy Spirit, in a way thought to be similar to the original Pentecost.

The tone for Korean Protestantism was actually set in 1907, at a series of revival meetings in Pyongyang. They marked the climax of the first twenty five years (1886-1907) of the Protestant movement. The Pyongyang revival of 1907 was a mass meeting in which church members by the thousands became caught up in an emotional wave that

⁵ Donald N. Clark, Christianity in Modern Korea (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1986), 6.

swept over the entire Korean Church. An eyewitness account suggests the flavor of the event:

After a short sermon Dr. Graham Lee took charge of the meeting and called for prayers. So many began praying that Dr. Lee said, "If you want to pray like that, all pray," and the whole audience began to pray out loud all together. The effect was indescribable. Not confusion, but a vast harmony of sound and spirit, a mingling together of souls moved by an irresistible impulse to prayer. It sounded to me like the falling of many waters, an ocean of prayer beating against God's throne

As the prayer continued, a spirit of heaviness and sorrow came upon the audience. Over on one side, someone began to weep and, in a moment, the whole congregation was weeping. . . .

Man after man would rise, confess his sin, break down and weep, and then throw himself to the floor and beat the floor with his fists in a perfect agony of conviction Sometimes after a confession, the whole audience would break out in audible prayer and the effect... was something indescribable And so the meeting went on until two o'clock a.m., with confession and weeping and praying.⁶

These revival meetings were a spiritual explosion and spectacular, sweeping through the peninsula from 1903 to 1907, that touched off the massive ingathering of the church and permanently stamped its character with revivalistic fervor.⁷ Those who had participated in the revival meeting experienced many spiritual phenomena such as tongues, miracles, healings, exorcism, shock and fire-baptism. They went to their homes and spoke of what they had seen and heard. As their reports were carried from place to place, an intensive longing and desire for the same spiritual experience was created in the minds of the people. The revival quickly spread all over the nation.

Strong spiritual experience during the era of the revival movement is not only a

⁶ William Newton Blair, Gold in Korea (New York: Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., 1957), 66-67.

⁷ Samuel Hugh Moffett, The Christians of Korea (New York: Friendship Press, 1962), 52.

unique experience of Korean Christian, but also compatible with spirituality of Biblical tradition. The Bible begins with the affirmation that “the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters” (Gen. 1:2). By this action of Spirit chaos was overcome and the world created. The Bible continues to record the existence of spirit-filled people through whom the word and will of God were made known. Joseph was acknowledged as a man in whom was the spirit of God when Pharaoh saw that Joseph interpreted his dreams correctly (Gen. 41:38).

Holy Spirit is the special gift from God. God gives the people of God special talents by the Spirit of God. When the people of Israel encamped near Sinai and were ready to build the tabernacle, God said to Moses that people would be found to do the work. “I have called by name Bezalel..... and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship” (Exod. 31:2,3).

Another evidence of the Spirit of God was the ability to prophesy. This also appears early in the biblical narrative. When Moses, at God’s behest, appointed seventy elders to help in the administration of the camp, it was written that the Lord’s Spirit was upon them, “and when the Spirit rested upon them, they prophesied.” Ezekiel also saw visions by the Spirit of God. “The Spirit entered me and set me upon my feet” (Ezek. 2:2); “the Spirit took me up” (Ezek. 3:2).

The gospels convey similar understandings of the ways of the Spirit. The gospels are unequivocal in stating early that the Spirit of God was upon Jesus. This is indicated in the narratives of his baptism. When Jesus came up out of the water, “immediately he saw the heavens opened and the Spirit descending upon him like a dove”

(Mark 1:10). According to the Luke, Jesus announces that the prophet's comforting vision of good news to his suffering people is fulfilled in his own person:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, so set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.
(Luke 4:16-19; Isa. 61:1-2).

The letters of Paul are filled with references to the work of the Holy Spirit in the believers and through the church. Paul speaks of the Spirit of Christ dwelling in them; of the power of the Spirit making their work possible. Paul writes, in the Corinthians, "Do you not know that you are God's temple, and that God's Spirit dwells in you?" (1 Cor. 3:16). And later (1 Cor. 12:8) he speaks of the variety of gifts but the same Spirit: Wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, speaking in or the interpreting of tongues.

According to the biblical tradition, the work of the Holy Spirit is a power which influences the concrete and realistic life of Christians. That is the Spirit of teaching, healing, miracle, and prophecy. The work of the Holy Spirit gives Christians mysterious experiences or enthusiastic dedication to the God. This kind of work of the Spirit was not a strange concept for Koreans because they had experienced spirits through the practices of Shamanism. Koreans with shamanistic ideas believed that healing, exorcism, blessing, and prophecy can be practiced through this spiritual contact with gods. So they could easily accept the Holy Spirit of Christianity, and also could feel it with emotion.

According to Mircea Eliade, Shamanism is an ancient technique of ecstasy and the shaman is also a specialist in ecstasy.⁸ The centrality and charismatic qualities of shamans derive from the spiritual power that enables the shaman to be a medium between man and the spirits. A shaman easily becomes a medium, miracle-worker, and healer through an ecstatic experience. The Korean people with shamanistic ideas could not only easily accept the work of the Holy Spirit, but also devoted themselves to the mysterious experience-centered faith. Nowadays, many Korean Christians still tend to be enthusiastic about receiving the Holy Spirit. They may go to a prayer mountain or pray for several days without food in order to receive the Holy Spirit. This kind of spiritual life of Korean Christians is surely related to the influence of Shamanism.

Charismatic Leadership and Shamanism

The charismatic tendency of the Korean Church leadership is related to shamanistic influence. A shaman is the central character of Shamanism -- a charismatic leader of the practice of Shamanism. A shaman with charismatic power through mysterious ecstasy is capable of direct communication with representatives of the other world. She is able to help her fellow humans in crises believed to be caused by spirits and to act as a concrete mediator between this world and the other world in accompanying a soul to the other world, or fetching it from the domain of the spirits. A shaman who has charismatic power through the mysterious ecstasy acts as a healer, diviner, or guardian of livelihood.

From the early period of the Christian mission, Korean Church leaders want to have charismatic leadership with miraculous or mysterious power. Church members also

⁸ Eliade, Shamanism, 4-5.

expected that their religious leaders have charismatic power based on divine revelations. For example Sun Ju Kil, a truly unforgettable patron of the Korean Christian revival movement, heard the “heavenly voice calling him on the third night of his prayer”⁹ before he became the major leader of the early charismatic revival meetings. According to Kwang Sun Suh, even before he was converted into the Christian faith, this ecstatic experience was not unfamiliar to him. It was reported that Sun Ju Kil had experienced the “Spirit possession” in Pae Sung Mountain while he was chanting a spell.¹⁰ This special experience became a strong foundation of calling for him, and a basis of leadership for his followers.

Yong Do Lee, another charismatic leader of the revival movement in the 1930s, had a “mysterious experience” on December 24, 1928. This experience made him a charismatic leader who proclaimed the message of God without compromise.¹¹ Young Do Lee was a prophet of the wilderness. His message was too strong and prophetic for the present churches to accept, so he was denounced as a heretict or non-church activist by the Presbyterian church. After he led a strong revival movement for five years (1929-1933), he died because of a disease when he was thirty-three years old. Even though he lived a short life, his message with charismatic authority and prophetic spirituality still has been an unforgettable word for those who long for the living word of God.

Yonggi Cho, pastor of Yoido Full Gospel Church which is currently the largest

⁹ Kwang Sun Suh, Hankuk Kidokkyoui Saeroun Kwanjom [A new perspective of Korean Christianity] (Seoul: Sung Kwang Printing, 1983), 118.

¹⁰ Ibid., 118.

¹¹ Gilsup Song, Hankuk Sinhak Sasangsa [The history of Korean theological thought] (Seoul: Christian Literature Society, 1987), 300-02.

church in the world, is one of the charismatic leaders who has shamanistic spirituality. Rev. Cho began his ministry with five people in 1958, belonging to the assemblies of God. Twenty-five years later, his church had grown rapidly and eventually became the biggest church in the world. According to the statistics of Karen Hurston, the membership of the church in 1992 was about 645,000.¹²

His charismatic leadership and philosophy of ministry is similar to the shamanistic phenomenon. According to him, he began to believe in God when he was terribly disappointed by the death sentence of tuberculosis. After he was miraculously healed by his strong faith, he went to the Bible college of the Assemblies of God. This could be compatible to the procedure of the initiation of a shaman. According to shamanistic tradition, the process of being possessed is very interesting and unique. *Kang sin mu* (charismatic shaman, possessed shaman) is a shaman who is healed from a serious illness caused by the spirit of a god. The period of illness is long, from an average of eight to a maximum of thirty years. No medical treatment is possible and the illness is believed to be cured only by *kangsinch'e*, or "the ritual of the advent of the god." It is believed that the only way to escape the affliction is to become a shaman following the fate revealed by the god. If the shaman gives up the job after a cure has been effected, the illness will recur.¹³

Yonggi Cho's view of God and his philosophy of ministry is clearly like a possessed shaman who experiences a god through her own ecstasy. He said that the doctrine of

¹² Hurston, 196.

¹³ Tae Gon Kim, "Regional Characteristics of Korean Shamanism," 122.

threefold salvation was both the basic foundation of his ministry and the secret of how his church became the largest church in the world.¹⁴

What is the meaning of Rev. Cho's threefold blessing of salvation? In the early days when his church met beneath a tent, Rev. Cho began to ponder the words of 3 John 2: "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." Rev. Cho interpreted the verse as referring to the blessing of soul, health and prosperity in all respects, which elements comprise the so-called the threefold Blessing of Salvation.¹⁵ Spiritual blessing, material blessing, and the blessing of health are also important concern of Shamanism. Especially, his understanding of disease or human suffering is entirely similar to shamanistic understanding. Consequently, he is sometimes regarded as a big trouble-maker within the Korean Church since parts of his teaching are condemned as "unsound" or "very dangerous, beyond the sound doctrine of the Word of God." He believes that a disease or the suffering of a human being comes from a bad spirit. Therefore, exorcism is one of the most important ministries in his church. His message, "We can resolve all diseases or suffering through driving out bad spirits," must be attractive to people with shamanistic ideas.

In Shamanism, a shaman, as a wounded-healer, miracle-worker, and intermediary, has strong charismatic leadership among her followers, for she herself experienced special ecstasy and can communicate with other spirits to remove a misfortune and to invoke a blessing. In the Bible, we can see that charismatic leaders perform miracles, heal the

¹⁴ Hurston, 139.

¹⁵ Ibid., 139.

sick, and drive out demons through special spiritual experience or revelation from God. However, it is also an appropriate assertion that the charismatic leadership by means of divine messages in the Korean Church is almost identical in its external form to that of this traditional religion, Shamanism.

This Worldly Blessing and Shamanism

Korean churches have special prayer meetings or ceremonies which are related to this worldly blessing. For example, it is popular in the Christian church of Korea for church members to invite their pastor to perform a ceremony of blessing for the birth of children, for the newly built or purchased house, and for taking an examination for school or company. Especially during the season of an entrance examination of the university, almost all churches and Buddhist temples have special prayer meetings for parents who pray for success in an examination. Some parents pray with fasting. Some pray all night without sleeping. Some pray and offer much money. Blessing prayer for the newly-opened business is also one of important Christian ceremonies in Korea. It is popular for church members to invite their pastor to perform a ceremony of blessing before they open the new business.

All Korean churches especially practice the *Daeshimbang*, the great visitation program, one or two times a year. During the great visitation, the pastor visits the home of all church members and prays for the peace, health, and prosperity of the family. It is not a time of counseling or teaching, but rather a time of praying blessing on the family. According to shamanistic tradition, in the countryside, a shaman makes a visitation to each family in her *dangolpan* (the parish or territory) at the beginning of the year and after the

harvest to pray for the material blessing and peaceful life of the family.¹⁶ The believers, as a response, pay the shaman with money or grain.

Some pastors' messages are also deeply related to the theology of the earthly blessings. For example, they often preach about Christian life: Sunday-worship observation, the practice of tithing and offering, devotional church life in connection with this worldly-blessing. That is to say, "If you believe God ardently, you can be blessed by God" is one of main themes of Korean Christianity. Nowadays, many people still pray for material blessings shamelessly while at the same time giving offerings, sometimes in large amounts.¹⁷

According to Kwang Sun Suh, in the Christian church of Korea the traditional idea of this worldly blessing has been fused with faith in the Christian God in an indivisible manner. In other words, the typical goal of having faith in God is to receive the material blessing in this world, which is not different from the essential goal of Shamanism.¹⁸

The theme of blessed life in this world has been the central element of Shamanism. The idea of earthly blessing includes wealth, health, power and honor. According to Tae Gon Kim, most deities in Shamanism are related to the practical life of people in this world and particularly with material wealth, health, and longevity. The shaman rituals

¹⁶ Tae Gon Kim, Hankuk Musok Yunku, 431.

¹⁷ Bong Ho Son, "Some Dangers of Rapid Growth," in Korean Church Growth Explosion: Centennial of the Protestant Church, eds. Bong Rin Ro and Marlin L. Nelson (Seoul: World Life Press, 1983), 338.

¹⁸ Kwang Sun Suh, "Hankuk Christoinui Sago Bangbup," [Korean Christian's way of thinking] in Sin Hak Sa Sang [Theological thought] (Seoul: Korean Theological Study Institute, 1983), 268.

seek “utilitarian goals” for life in this world by exploiting the power of the spirit-gods.¹⁹

The utilitarian nature of Korean Shamanism was strongly reflected in former imported religions. Korean Shamanism easily influenced other religions such as Buddhism and Confucianism. When other imported religions came to Korea, they threatened Shamanism and the shamans because they were advanced forms of religion with organized systems of belief. Even in this situation, Korean Shamanism influenced the rituals and faith of the other religions. One of the important influences is the idea of this-worldly blessing.

For example, according to Dong Shik Ryu, Korean Buddhist temples, big or small, have three major buildings: *Daeungchun*, *Myungbu chun*, and *Samsungkak*. *Daeung chun* is a building to worship Buddha. *Myungbu chun* is a Buddhist temple to worship the spirit of the dead. However, *samsungkak* is a unique Buddhist temple in Korean Buddhism. *Samsungkak* is the shrine to worship three deities, seven stars, a mountain god and one Buddhist saint. The belief in the seven star god or the mountain god, who are believed to give people children, longevity, good health, and prosperity, are not originally part of Buddhistic tradition, but shamanistic tradition.²⁰ This is the result of folk Buddhism in Korea. The traditional blessing faith of Shamanism penetrated into the mind of the Koreans.

Ancestral worship is the most vital thing in the whole cult of Confucianism.

¹⁹ Tae Gon Kim, Hankukui Musok, 59-60.

²⁰ Dong Shik Ryu, Hankuk Mukyoui Yoksawakujo, 260-66.

Originally, one of main motives for ancestral worship was filial piety, one of the old ethical practices.²¹ Under the old family system, this was a natural outcome for the large group of families which lived together, worked together, respected their one common head together and became attached to the communal life. The love and grace received from the ancestor of the family were gratefully remembered by his posterity, and his works were inherited. Therefore, this is not a form of religious practice, but rather a socio-cultural means of control.

However, after this ancestral worship of Confucianism was mixed with the idea of worshipping the dead soul in Shamanism, it became an important religious ritual of the family. According to Bong-Bae Park, it is clear that the ancestors are deities that are worshipped by Koreans.²² Korean people think that they may even cause family disasters, including diseases, when the ancestor spirits are not treated right. On the other hand, Korean people think that the feeding of the ancestors with sacrificial food is directly related to the blessing and prosperity of the family. It is surely a shamanistic tradition that the happiness of the descendants is thought to be attainable only by offering good services to the soul of the ancestors.²³

As Shamanism received the other religions such as Buddhism and Confucianism, Christianity was accepted as the religion of blessing. In the Bible, God is surely the God of blessing. God gives his loving people unlimited blessings: riches and honours,

²¹ Duk-Whang Kim, A History of Religions in Korea (Seoul: Daeji Moonhwa-sa, 1988), 54.

²² Bong-Bae Park, "Kidokkyowa Josangsungbae," [Christianity and ancestor worship], in Tochakhwa Sinhak [Contextualization theology] (Seoul: Methodist Theological Seminary, 1984), 92-93.

²³ Duk-Whang Kim, 54.

longevity, good health, wisdom, and victory. These blessings are what people with shamanistic spirituality really desire. "If you fully obey the Lord your God and carefully follow all his commands I give you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations on earth. All these blessings will come upon you and accompany you-- You will be blessed in city and blessed in the country." (Deut. 28:1-3) This is one of the passages which Christians with shamanistic ideas like best. The biblical reference about blessings is surely rooted in and wedded with the shamanistic soil that was already there. They want to have God's blessing in their daily life, and to escape from all events of misfortune by the help of the Spirit of God. They believe enthusiastically in God, so that they may be blessed by God. These tendencies are surely related to the idea of this worldly blessing from Shamanism. With little emphasis on Christian social responsibilities or daily Christian living, to promise loudly earthly blessings as rewards of faith, prayer, and sacrifices in forms of offerings and services to the church is one of the big problems of the Korean church.

Korean Church Growth and Shamanism

Since the first Protestant missionaries, Horace Underwood and Henry Appenzeller, from North America came to Korea in 1885, the Korean church has grown very rapidly. Already the Korean Christian population has grown to almost 15 million, including Roman Catholics, about 30 percent of the country's 45 million inhabitants. This is one of the highest percentages of Christians in any Asian country.

The rapid church growth in Korea is not entirely due to spiritual factors in Korean Christianity. Non-spiritual or situational factors deeply rooted in the history of the nation have contributed to this growth.

Politically speaking, Korea is tragically located among surrounding major powers such as China, Japan and Russia. Korea has been constantly invaded, especially from China who subjugated Korea several times in our history. Eventually Japan annexed Korea in 1910. The Japanese ruled Korea thirty-six years and caused much physical and mental damage. At that time many Korean intellectuals welcomed Western influence including Christianity as a means of liberating Korea from the Japanese colonial power. Christianity introduced new ideas of political democracy into Korea through mission schools. Actually, the American missionaries, although politically neutral, shared the sufferings of the Korean people. This is one of the factors of church growth in Korea.²⁴ As it were, the sufferings experienced by Korean people during the Japanese occupation in Korea (1910-1945) and during the Korean War (1950-1953) and the constant threat of Communism from North Korea have encouraged the people to find their security in God rather than humans.

Socially speaking, Korea had two social classes. The whole society was sharply divided into camps: The *Yang-ban* and *Sang-nom*, meaning the class of nobility and the class of low birth, respectively. The *Yang-ban* had plenty of opportunities to be promoted to government officialdom, but the *Sang-nom* had none. The butchers,

²⁴ Harold S. Hong, "Social, Political, and Psychological Aspects of Church Growth," in Korean Church Growth Explosion, 177.

craftsmen, and tenant farmers constituted the *Sang-nom* class. The *Yang-ban*'s status and property were inherited by their descendants.

Christianity attacked the *Yang-ban* system and promoted the idea of the equality of every person before God. Consequently, the church's door was wide open for people long alienated from social status. This was one of the important factors of the growth of the Korean church.

Spiritual factors in Korea, first of all, are deeply related to the growth of the Korean church. Like other people, Koreans were religious even before adopting the imported religions from China and the West. A half dozen religions are prominent today in Korea: Shamanism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Chondokyo, and Christianity. In a certain sense, dominate religions such as Confucianism and Buddhism have been indigenized to the Korean context. However, when Christianity came to the country, Buddhism and Confucianism were not able to answer the spiritual or existential needs of the people because they were in a state of decay.²⁵ During the spiritual vacuum in the Yi dynasty, Christianity could easily enter Korea.

Shamanistic faith was probably the most influential key to the great growth of the church. Roy E. Shearer, who studied Korean church growth extensively, writes:

I have seen enough in this study and have had enough experience to realize that animism has a close relationship to church growth in Korea What is needed is a study of the dynamics of church growth, showing how Christianity wins or loses the power struggle with the animistic forces in Korea. Increased understanding is demanded if our presentation of the gospel is to be successful. The continuing animism of the country people of Korea must be taken more

²⁵ Bong Rin Ro, "Non-Spiritual Factors in Church Growth," in Korean Church Growth Explosion, 165-66.

seriously in the future.²⁶

Shamanism has been with the Korean people since the beginning of their history. For thousands of years it has provided the people with the means of explaining the universe, human beings and their life experiences, giving shape to the frame work of the Korean mind. Not only the individual life, but also the social life of the Koreans, therefore, have survived on the basis of this system of explanation.

Particularly at times of individual and social crises, this religion has provided the solution for many problems. Therefore, even though former imported religions lost their influence, Korean shamanism still has not disappeared and has influenced the life style and mind of the Korean people.

Shamanism easily accepts the other religions. Shamanism did not bother other religions when they came into Korea. Korean Shamanism has developed by a process of mutual influences with other religions.²⁷

Throughout the history of Korean mission, much shamanistic faith and many rituals have been employed by the local Christians in their daily religious life. Sometimes, some religious leaders employ shamanistic faith and ritual to satisfy the religious and existential needs of their members: blessing centered message, healing through exorcism, excessive mysticism, and enthusiastic prayer. So, we sometimes hear negative evaluations and criticism of Korean Church, which is related to syncretism.

²⁶ Roy E. Shearer, Wildfire : Church Growth in Korea (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1966), 218-19.

²⁷ Sang Hee Mun, Hankukeui Shamanism [Korean Shamanism] (Seoul: Pundo Chulpansa, 1975), 129-30.

Korean shamanism has some negative elements. Christianity in Korea struggles with these negative elements. For example, many intellectual Korean Christians are uncomfortable with superstitious trend and selfishness of Christians with shamanistic mind. Christians with shamanistic ideas show signs of narrow-mindedness, and one-sided practice of Christian faith. Their main concern is to eliminate evil fortunes and to invoke blessings. Common themes of the preaching of many growing churches are related to material blessings and healing through miraculous methods.

The selfishness of faith is one of the serious problems of shamanistic spirituality. Some shamanized Christians often show excessive concentration on individual well-being. Although they are very active and devoted to their church, they are often insensitive to the pain and suffering of their neighborhood. Their enthusiastic dedication is sometimes related to selfishness for some blessings.

Excessive mysticism often influence the church negatively. Those who seek mysticism have a tendency to be devoted to mystical experience and feeling. They do not respect biblical teaching or reasonable judgement. They often criticize the belief of other Christians while depending on their own experiences. This causes the disunion and enmity of a church.

First of all, most of the major aspects of this religion are found to be in conflict with the biblical teachings. Magical techniques and objects, emphasis of demonology, ritual as the magical power of transformation, and the concepts of gods and human beings are in conflict with the Christian understanding.

These negative elements of Shamanism are a problem to be solved in the Korean church. The Korean church struggles with many negative elements of Shamanism, today, too. Nevertheless, as I mentioned in this chapter, zealous prayer, the Holy Spirit movement, the charismatic movement, this worldly blessing centered faith and miracle centered faith have greatly influenced Korean church growth.

Chapter 4

Shamanism as a Spiritual Resource for Korean Christians

Historically, the elite of Korea have generally tended to scorn or ignore Shamanism because of primitive and superstitious characteristics, particularly after the more sophisticated belief systems of Buddhism and Confucianism made their appearance. When the Protestant missionaries brought Christianity to Korea, they also regarded Shamanism as the enemy of Christianity, or as idol worship. They forced Korean Christians to throw away all the ways of Korean Shamanism, which was considered to be nothing but superstitious belief in spirits in trees and stones and in all other living and non-living things.

The Japanese colonial government for decades suppressed the village shaman rituals as a subversive act of resistance. The Korean dictatorial governments opposed the revival of the minjung Kut movement as a subversive means of struggle and spotted Shamanism as a barrier to modernization. Nevertheless, the Korean shamanistic tradition connected with birth, life, death, marriage, riches and honours, exorcism, healing, and elimination of evil fortune did not disappear and was still the most basic and pervasive form of Korean religiosity and spirituality.

What is the origin of dynamic in Korean Shamanism? David Kwang-sun Suh, a professor of the Ewha University, finds the origin of the power of survival in Korean Shamanism from the minjung theological perspective. According to Suh, Korean shamanism is the religion of the minjung (people--especially, the poor, oppressed, and

socially marginalized).¹ Korean Shamanism has a specially liberating spirituality in the Korean historical context, which is the spirituality to vent the minjung's Han, and to give community *Shin-myung* ("divine excitement"). This is the spirituality which vents the Han of oppressed women. Korean Shamanism has some negative elements, as I mentioned in the previous chapter. Nevertheless, some elements of Shamanism, for example, the spirituality to vent minjung is Han, the spirituality to vent oppressed women's Han, the spirituality related to communal life, and the recognition of the importance of spiritual experience can share a common ground with Christianity and can be used as a resource of religious education for the integrated spiritual growth of Korean Christians.

Shamanism as a Spirituality Venting the Minjung's Han

Korean minjung theologians discovered anew that Korean Shamanism is the religion of the minjung. "Minjung" is translated in many different ways, depending on the scholar.

Young Hak Hyun, former professor of Ewha Women's University, defines the minjung in contradistinction to those who are leaders and the so-called special people in society. Minjung are those without political power, economic wealth, social position, and higher education.²

David Kwang-sun Suh defines the term in the following manner: Minjung is different from *laos* in the biblical tradition, but is similar to "the poor" in Exodus 20:22-23:39. It

¹ David Kwang-sun Suh, "Liberating Spirituality in the Korean Minjung Tradition," in Asian Christian Spirituality: Reclaiming Traditions, eds. Virginia Fabella, Peter K. H. Lee, and David Kwang-sun Suh (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1992), 33.

² Young Hak Hyun, "Theological Understanding of Korean Mask Dance," in Minjung and Korean Theology (Seoul: Korean Theological Study Institute, 1982), 15.

is also different from people, crowd, or folk. It has a special political and theological connotation which is best described by the Korean minjung itself. They are a collective group of people alienated from the society by its antagonistic social structures. Among them are the physically handicapped who have been rejected by society. They usually live in the “shadow” of the society and end up in the kind of “prison” outside of “human territory.”³

Suh illustrates his definition by using Jesus’ banquet parable. The physically handicapped, widows, the poor, orphans, servants, and the likes, who were not invited first, but who were later invited to God’s feast, these are the minjung according to Suh’s definition.

Most minjung theologians would agree with the minimum working definition given in Wan Sang Han’s minjung Sociology: “Minjung are those who have been politically oppressed, economically exploited, and socio-culturally discriminated against for a long time.”⁴ In a word, the minjung are the suffering oppressed people.

“Han” is a typical Korean word which expresses the suffering of the minjung. Han is the feeling of “deep agony and sorrow,” “accumulated bitterness,” “resentment,” or “righteous indignation.” The concept of Han is extended from the reality of an individual to that of a social group and of a historical community, and extended from experience and existence to indicate a threatening or destructive reality.⁵ It is not merely a psychological

³ David Kwang-sun Suh, “Minjung and the Holy Spirit,” in Minjung and Korean Theology (Seoul: Korean Theological Study Institute, 1982), 53, 217.

⁴ Wan Sang Han, Minjung Sahoehak [Minjung sociology] (Seoul: Chongro-seochuck, 1984), 26-27.

⁵ Changwon Suh, A Formulation of Minjung Theology (Seoul: Nathan Publishing, 1990), 127.

state, but also political and economic realities interacting and bringing themselves to bear on the mind and body of the minjung.

According to minjung theologians, the Korean people have historically accumulated Han during the long periods of persecution and suffering from within and without. The experience of Han, or Han experience, is not limited to the political and economic spheres. Under Confucianism's imposition of strict laws and customs discriminating against women, the existence of women was itself Han. Thus the minjung live with Han, they accumulate Han, and they die with Han. Therefore, the spirituality of the Korean minjung is a spirituality which has risen out of deep feelings of Han.

Korean Shamanism's concern is to overcome the Han of an individual as well as the collective Han of the minjung. Hulbert, who first came to Korea in 1886 as a missionary educator and who later served as the Korean King's emissary to Washington D.C. (1905-1906), understood well the meaning of Shamanism to Korean people: "As a general thing, we may say that the all-around Korean will be a Confucianist when in society, a Buddhist when he philosophizes and a spirit-worshipper when he is in trouble."⁶

A shaman, a central character of Shamanism and charismatic leader of the practice of Shamanism is a wounded-healer who knows quite well the existential predicament of humans. Especially, *kangsin mu*, the shaman possessed by the spirit of god, experiences a special severe physical illness. A mystic illness caused by the spirit of a god usually begins without any clear cause: The individual is unable to eat normally, perhaps developing indigestion or an aversion to meat or fish. She may experience terrible pain in

⁶ Homer Bezaleel Hulbert, The Passing of Korea (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 1969), 403-04.

her whole body. She experiences frequently communication with the god. She becomes unable to distinguish dreams from reality, hallucinating and hearing the god's voice even in a waking state. As the condition progresses she may go mad, and take to wandering around the mountains and the forest. The future shaman may experience the truth of suffering, death, and resurrection of humanity through her own existential suffering and an initiation ceremony (*naerim-Kut*).⁷ The mysterious illness, the dreaming, the hallucinations and the wanderings all symbolize the death of her secular being, and *naerim-Kut* (initiation ceremony to be a shaman) symbolizes her rebirth as a divine entity. Through this process a shaman is not merely a sick man, but cured-healer who has power to help others.⁸

The therapeutic function of a Kut performed by a shaman is one of the most important liberating spiritual experiences venting the minjung's Han. A shaman performs to cure the sick, to comfort the lost ones, and to reconcile broken families through the shamanistic ritual. Shamans even feed and make happy the unhappy wandering spirits of the deceased which have no place to settle for good. The dead spirits died with Han and were spirits which gave living people sufferings, such as disease, disaster, or failure. Shamans remove the Han of the dead and the living both through the ritual.

The therapeutic function to vent the minjung's Han is not limited to an individual level. The socially therapeutic function of shamanistic ritual is shown in the village Kut. When Kut is performed in a village community, it is not constrained by individual greed,

⁷ Eliade, *Shamanism* 33, 76, 93.

⁸ Ibid., 27.

nor is it a merely “religious” affair. Rather, it is open to the world and to the community for peace, justice, and well-being.⁹ This could be understood as a form of group therapy for the conflicts and sufferings that exist in their society.

The minjung in a village have a special feeling, *shin-myung*, through the village Kut. The *shin-myung* is a collective feeling in a communal act, such as dancing together, worshipping together, drinking together, and visiting all houses in a village for exorcism with *nongak* band (Korean traditional instrumental band). This *shin-myung*, translated into English as “divine excitement,” is not necessarily a religious feeling, but rather a highly spirited feeling, a creative dynamism flowing out of one’s viscera,¹⁰ a traditional form of play and culture to forget all kinds of suffering. So, the Japanese colonial government for decades suppressed the village shaman rituals as a subversive act of resistance. The Korean military governments opposed the revival of the minjung Kut movement as a subversive means of struggle.

Through the gospel, the historical life of Jesus was bound up with the poor, oppressed, and despised minjung. The historical quest for Jesus of Nazareth importantly indicates that his life, death, and resurrection were completely identified with the life situation of the oppressed people. Korean Shamanism has the liberating spirituality for the poor, sick, oppressed, and marginalized like the movement of the historical Jesus. Therefore, Korean Christianity should revive and revitalize the liberating spirituality in shamanistic tradition which is our own tradition and religiosity.

⁹ David Kwang-sun Suh, “Liberating Spirituality in the Korean Minjung Tradition,” 35.

¹⁰ Ibid., 35.

Shamanism as a Communal Spirituality

One of the reasons why Shamanism is criticized is that shamanism is individualistic, too selfish, and family centered. Many Korean theologians think that Korean Shamanism is basically a family-centered religion that conserves the welfare of the family by exorcising the evil spirits, healing the sick in the family, and taking care of the ancestor spirits and the deceased. In fact, people with shamanistic ideas are always interested in being in peace and harmony with the spirits in and around the house, living and dead, in order to preserve the well-being of the members of the family and to promote the health, wealth, and success of the household.

However, recent Korean Minjung theologians begin to think that Korean Shamanism has an obvious communal spirit which integrates all the people of the nation and maintains the system of a society. According to Chung Hee Lee, the traditional ritual, Kut, can be either an individual or a village Kut,¹¹ depending on the subject or character of the ritual. In the category of individual Kut, there are basically three kinds: one that seeks the cure of illnesses; one that asks for blessings upon a family; and one that serves as initiation rite or as ritual on behalf of victims of unjust deaths. Unlike the individual Kut which varies according to purpose, the village Kut differs according to the region in which it is performed. In every village Kut, the subjects are generally all residents of the village, and the Kut is directly linked to the community life of a given region. Ideologically, the village Kut is a community ritual that integrates communal work and play, so that it is generally accompanied by village meetings and communal play.

¹¹ Chung Hee Lee, "Liberation Spirituality in Dae-dong Kut," in Asian Christian Spirituality, 37-38.

In some regions, the Kut is directed by a *nong ak* (Korean traditional farm music) band, where players use traditional Korean musical instruments, including gongs and cymbals. Thus the village Kut is an integral part of the culture of the minjung that nurtures their communal life energy.¹² All people in a village have one feeling of togetherness through the village Kut which is performed by playing together, worshipping together, dancing together, and drinking together.

Dae-dong Kut, a typical village Kut, shows that traditional Korean Shamanism has a strong communal spirituality to integrate a society *Dae-dong Kut* means literally "Great Togetherness Festival." There are a number of features of the *Dae-dong Kut* performed by the village community. Unlike seasonal festivals and peasant rituals, the *Dae-dong Kut* is carried out annually, or five or ten years, depending on the circumstances of the village. There are two types of village Kut. The first type is performed by a shaman and calls for the participation of all the village residents in the sacred place. The second is performed by the *nongak* band that travels from house to house in the village. At either Kut, the village residents select as leader someone in the village whose family has not been subjected to misfortune or unlucky omens.

The deity worshipped in the *Daedong Kut* is of various types. One of these is the village god connected to the legendary founding of the village. There are other deities, including: nameless gods of the heavens, earth, rivers, and the oceans; souls which have died unjust deaths in natural calamities or in historical events; and historical or legendary figures who have become deified.

¹² Ibid., 37-38.

A *Dae dong Kut* is a grand festival that takes up to one month of preparation and may last for as many as ten days. As part of the process, the village people hold a *Dae-dong* council. This council selects the village representatives, discusses ways of raising funds for the village, and deliberates on the ways of distributing the communal labor. The profits from communal labor are used for the benefit of the whole village: for example, for the repair of village roads or for acquiring *nong ak* instruments.

In addition to the *Dae-dong* council, *Dae-dong* play is also part of the *Dae-dong Kut*. *Dae-dong* play cultivates the communal spirit within the village and forms the basis for the creation and development of minjung cultural art. The play, led by *nong-ak*, includes tug of war, mask-dances, stone battles, and wrestling, and integrates an acute sense of critique and an intense spirit of battle.

As stated above, the Korean shaman ritual has a communal spirituality to integrate people and society. According to Dong Shik Ryu, the social function of Korean Shamanism is deeply related to the maintenance system of a society. Rituals, beliefs and even religious leadership usually have the function of maintaining the economic, political and kingship system.¹³ The belief in dragon god and *Sanshinje* (the ritual for the mountain god), are other historical elements which show that Korean shamanistic traditions has strong communal spirituality to integrate a nation and people. According to Dong Shik Ryu, the dragon god has been worshipped in the rituals as the defense god of the nation since the 4th century when Silla became a sovereign kingdom. The defense of the nation from invading enemies (ancient China or Japan) was presented as the highest

¹³ Dong Shik Ryu, *Hankuk Mukyoui Yoksawakujo*, 101.

virtue of the people in the rituals of dragon worship. Some kings were believed to become the dragons of the eastern sea.¹⁴

Sanshin Je is a ritual to worship the mountain god. It is a widely performed ritual all over the nation. One of the great effects of the *Sanshin Je* has been the maintenance of the social classes which is centered around the sovereignty of the kings. The origin of the *Sanshin Je* (the ritual for the mountain god) is related to the myth of the founder of old Korea. Tankoon was the founder of Korea and was a great shaman, and his worship on the great altar on kwanghwa was simply a shamanistic performance.¹⁵ Tankoon was born from the union of the heavenly prince and a woman who was transformed into human form from a bear. Tankoon became the mountain god on which the heavenly prince descended, after his long reign in the first kingdom. This is why the mountain god ritual has been pervasive for a long period of time in the history of Korea. The belief in the dragon god and mountain god are deeply related to shamanistic belief and are pervasive all over the nation. That is not only shamanistic faith, but also a strong power integrating all people.

This communal spirituality to integrate all people began to disappear from the last period of Silla kingdom. According to Man Ja Choi, after Buddhism became the state religion of Koryo Dynasty, Shamanism was transferred into an individual religion which seeks blessing, prosperity and protection, and lost the function of communal ritual. After the Dynasty of Chosen made Confucianism of the state religion of the Dynasty,

¹⁴ Ibid., 101-02.

¹⁵ Charles Allen Clark, 176.

Shamanism was much more neglected, persecuted, and was reduce to a family religion for women.¹⁶

As recent Korean Shamanism is individualistic, family-centered, and interested in health, wealth, success, and blessings, many Korean Christians with shamanistic ideas are also individualistic and interested in the material blessings and success of this world. This negative characteristic was more deepened by the early Protestant missionaries. When the early Protestant missionaries came to Korea, in 1885, the Dynasty of Chosen was on the brink of ruin. After about 15 years, the Dynasty of Chosen was wholly conquered by Japan and was controlled by them until 1945. In this situation Protestant missionaries emphasized individual salvation and salvation of spirit. The message about individual salvation comforted Korean people who suffered from the Japanese reign and their existential predicament. That kind of faith became one of the important spiritualities of Korean Christians.

Christian spirituality is not only personal but communal. All the believers of the early Christian church were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. (Acts. 2:44-45). St. Paul understands Christians as a part of one body. In Romans, Paul says "Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we are who many form one body, and each member belongs to all others." (Rom. 12:4-5) The Bible does not know of seperating individuals from the people of Israel or from the

¹⁶ Man Ja Choi, "Hankuk Musokedaehan Yუსungsinhakjukhaesuk," [Shamanism from the perspective of feminist theology] in *Jongkyodawonjuuiwa sin hakjukgwaje* [Pluralism and theological task] (Seoul: Christian Literature Society, 1990), 231.

church; our relationship in belief are as members of a body, not as isolated individuals.

Korean shamanistic rituals represent a specific communal spirituality compatible with the communal spirituality of Christianity. Examples include: not separating individuals from the minjung, working together, worshipping together in the state of ecstasy, playing together with dancing and singing, and comforting dead and living spirits together. These kinds of traditional communal acts of spirituality of the Korean people could be used as a resource for Christian religious education for those who cling to individual well-being.

Shamanism as a Resource of Women's Liberation

Korean women have contributed much to the growth of the Korean church during the 100 year history of Protestantism in Korea. One of the policies of the early missionaries was to evangelize people and then establish churches and Christian Schools. Missionaries established not only men's schools, but also women's schools. An essay in the Chosun Christian Bulletin on December 29, 1898 said, "Education of house wives is such an urgent task. The thriving of the household, revival of the nation and power of people depend upon the education of Korean women." Truly, the missionaries' founding of women's schools based on the spirit of equality of the sexes was the first torchlight for liberating Korean women and opened the way for Korean women's education. The purpose of this education was to equip church women to awaken fellow Korean women from the deep sleep of social and political ignorance.¹⁷ According to Bong Rin Ro, the Korean woman is somewhat like the Moslem woman in her home life. The women's

¹⁷ Kwang Sun Suh, Hankuk Kitokkyoueui Sae Euishik [A new understanding of Christianity in Korea] (Seoul: Christian Society of Korea, 1985), 63-65.

quarters are separate and she must not be too much seen, if at all, by any man outside her immediate family. The gospel meant liberty and love for her.¹⁸

It is quite true that the gospel has been a large factor in liberating women in Korea and giving them the almost complete freedom which they have today. Outside of surrender of her old imported religions, the Korean woman had much to gain and nothing to lose by becoming a Christian. Her circle of social contacts were immediately widened and enriched. Christianity gave a higher status to women than what they had known.

The growth of the Korean church is especially closely related to women's activity. From the beginning of Korean mission, Women's Preaching Meetings in Presbyterian churches, Women's Propagation Meetings in the Methodist churches, and Women's Meetings in the Holiness church and Salvation Army were organized; they contributed much towards increasing church membership and enlightening and raising women's status in society. The main object of the women's movement was preaching. Besides that, they spread the knowledge of Korean language and the Bible and aided the improvement of the status of living. As the women's movement in the churches developed little by little, women found their way into society through their churches.¹⁹

First of all, the Korean women were very active in direct evangelism. They played a remarkable role in establishing new churches. For example, in 1899 about forty housewives gathered and organized a witnessing committee in Chang Yun, Kyung Sang Nam Do. They opened the map of the five neighboring subcountries and marked places

¹⁸ Bong Rin Ro, "Non-Spiritual Factors in Church Growth," in Korean Church Growth Explosion, 284.

¹⁹ Duk-Wang Kim, 364.

where the gospel of Christ should be spread. They visited each place, witnessing for Jesus and established churches. They not only made efforts in establishing churches in our country, but also in evangelizing the whole world.²⁰ Because of these strong activities of women, today, three-fourths of people in Korean churches are women.

If Christianity gave Korean women a specific role and liberation consciousness in daily or religious life, Shamanism also gave Korean women the same meanings in their daily or religious life. Other religions imported before Christianity, Buddhism and Confucianism are male-centered religions. For example, during the long rule of Confucianism, Korean women have suffered most. They always had to obey the Confucian law which set them in a very low position. One of the popular words at that time, which was related to Confucianism, was *Yupiljongbu*. *Yupiljongbu* means that the woman always has to follow man. Except for a few woman who lived in noble families, most women could not learn from books; they could only learn how to handle their family affairs. Because Confucianism is an ideology for the upper class and educated people, women always lived with the suffering of oppression and estrangement. However, through the long history of Korea, Shamanism was always opened to both, male and female. Not only men, but also women could be shamans. Rather, after persecution, the vast majority of shamans and their clients are female. Their religious leadership also is evaluated not by sex, but by spiritual power.

There are several reasons why Korean Shamanism should be reevaluated as a resource of woman liberation. The most important is that historically, the role of the

²⁰ Youn-ok Lee, "The Role of Women in Korean Church Growth," in Korean Church Growth Explosion, 235.

shaman in Korea has been held mostly by women, while today, there continues to be few male shamans. In old Korean society, Korean women had no opportunity to have noteworthy jobs. They had no authority and belonged first to their fathers, then their husbands, and finally to their sons. From this viewpoint, the work of a shaman was a professional job officially permitted to women even though they sometimes were persecuted by the government. It was the only role that permitted women access to all levels and spheres of the society, making it potentially the most powerful role through which women could exert influence in a society where they had no authority. The shaman served royalty as well as commoners, males as well as females, and had access to both the public and private domains.²¹

The second is the role of Korean women in the process of transmission of the shamanistic traditions. Under the influence of strong Confucianism, what Korean women have is only responsibility and obedience. Women should live in the seclusion of their own homes. The old Korean home was controlled by a patriarchal system from Confucianism. In this situation, tradition which old Korean women had and handed down at home is the role of the officiator or keeper of the poli-shamanistic gods. We can regard a Korean home being a poli-god temple; a kitchen god a hall god, a yard god, etc. The officiator of these gods was definitely the housewife. Superficially or outwardly Confucian rituals are the faith and tradition of the family. However, actually or substantially old Korean families had another tradition which is led by females,

²¹ Young Sook Kim Harvey, Six Korean Women: The Socialization of Shamans (Los Angeles: West Publishing, 1979), 3.

grandmother or mother.²² They strived to have peace and comfort in their families through the communication with the supernatural world by praying before a bowl of pure well water. This is the tradition of old Korean women from generation to generation.

The third reason why Korean Shamanism should be reevaluated as a resource for Korean women is related to the Han of Korean women. Korean women have lived with much Han from oppression, estrangement, and sacrificial dedication for the prosperity and protection of the family. As stated above, even though Shamanism has been neglected socially, Korean Shamanism had the power to vent people's Han. While Buddhism or Confucianism, as a male-centered religion, oppressed women, Korean shamanistic traditions gave Korean women liberating consciousness through the communication with gods, and self-identity as the officiator worshipping the family god. It is clear that Korean Shamanism has many negative elements because of its too superstitious characteristic and self-centered inclinations. Nevertheless, the spirituality of women's liberation in Korean Shamanism could be used as a spiritual resource for Korean Christian education.

Shamanism as a Resource of Experience-centered Education

In our time, there are indications that many people are again turning to feelings as a basis for their religious belief. In his essay, "The Social Function of Poetry," T.S Eliot wrote:

Much has been said everywhere about the decline of religious belief; not so much notice has been taken of the decline of religious sensibility. The trouble of the modern age is not merely the inability to believe certain things about God and man which our forefathers believed, but the inability to feel toward God and man as

²² Kwang-hee Soh, "Dialogue: Traditional Thoughts and Manners," in Custom and Manners in Korea, ed. Shin Young Chun (Seoul: International Cultural Foundation, 1985), 124.

they did. A belief which you no longer believe is something which to some extent you can still understand; but when religious feeling disappears, the words in which men have struggled to express it became meaningless.²³

Here, Eliot has raised an issue that we cannot avoid: belief systems that are detached from the living experience of religious people become empty and meaningless. Attending to religious feelings is the necessary prolegomena to religious belief.

To Korean people, Shamanism is a living and dynamic practice of religious experience. Shamanism does not survive through any organized education, but flows as a stream, as a form of living spirituality. It doesn't have any intellectual system of faith and noble philosophy of life. Neither does one find formal training institutions for the religious leaders, nor does one find any sacred textbook for Shamanism. Transmission depends primarily on informal socialization. Nevertheless, Shamanism in Korea has survived some two millennia, penetrating the minds of common folk despite even hostile environments. What is the origin of the power of life of Shamanism? The origin of the power of survival of Shamanism could be explained from its intense religious experience. A shaman and her clients experience special ecstasy through singing, dancing, crying, or the special utterances given as those of a deceased spirit. The specific experience gives the shaman and clients healing, restoring and transforming activity.

Shamanism looks bizarre to Western eyes, yet, in principle, what we see in the shaman is a pattern that is not utterly dissimilar from certain biblical figures. The great figures of the Old and New Testaments, from Moses and Isaiah to Jesus and Paul, testify to "singularizing," intense religious experience. This special experience is not for

²³ T. S. Eliot, On Poetry and Poets (New York: Noonday Press, 1961), 3-16.

only themselves, but for the service of God and his people. Far from seeing themselves as controlling God, they see themselves as his agents in the community. They do not distinguish “body” and “soul” into discreet and separable realities, but approach personal and national “illness” (from leprosy to apostasy) from the side of soul.²⁴

The essence of Korean Shamanism lies in the mysterious union between the spirit-gods and man. People with shamanistic faith experience venting their Han, and overcoming of life over death, good over ill, health over sickness, through their mysterious union with gods. According to Frank Rogers Jr., Christian education must be oriented in the Spirit, empowering persons to participate in this Spirit’s healing, restoring and transforming activity, grounded in hope and faithful in deed.²⁵ The Holy Spirit of God is redemptively at work in creation, healing, empowering and reconciling as that Spirit seeks to restore creation into the kingdom of God. The Spirit of God is a living and transcendent reality at work in creation awakening humanity to its ground in the grace of God, empowering humanity into a fully alive and relational selfhood and sending humanity forth to participate with the Spirit transforming creation into the kingdom of God. In short, the Spirit of God seeks to draw humanity into a living and reconciling knowing of God.²⁶ The basic thought of shamanistic faith is that all affairs of people should be understood as an experience in the relationship with the spirit of god. Of course, in Korean Shamanism, the concept of deity tends to be vague; this is reflected in the

²⁴ Dennis E. Hughes, “Shamanism and Christian Faith,” Religious Education 71 (1976): 396.

²⁵ Frank Rogers Jr. Karl Barth’s Faith Epistemology of the Spirit as a Critical and Constructive Framework for Christian Education, Ph.D. Diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 1991 (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1991), 473.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 474.

uncertainty of hierarchy among gods. There are so many gods: house gods, kitchen god, bathroom god, earth god, mountain god, heaven god, sea god, Sun god, moon god, stars god, large tree god, etc.. However, whatever their gods are, the common thought of people with shamanistic faith is to consider mysterious union or communication in both their daily and religious life.

Korean shamanistic tradition has been handed down not by logical system or sacred canon, but by special experiences of believers, seen, heard, and felt. This religious phenomenon could be compatible to the movement of the early Christianity. The beliefs expressed by the first Christians were nothing less than the explication of what they had seen and heard, felt and experienced.²⁷ After John the Baptist had been imprisoned, his disciples approached Jesus and asked : “ Are you he who is to come, or shall we look for another?” The answer they received threw them back upon their experience: “Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them (Matt. 11:2-5). According to Luke 4:18-19, this was the gift of God by the power of the Spirit. Shamanism is a religion transmitted by the great specialists in the human soul. Therefore, it could be used as a resource for experience centered education for Korean Christians.

²⁷ Hughes, 396.

Chapter 5

Bible Study for Practicing the Liberating Spirituality

The Aim of This Chapter

This chapter is an attempt to integrate the spiritual growth of shamanized Korean Christians. Shamanistic factors contain both positive and negative dimensions in the Korean church and the spirituality of Korean Christians. Bible study series in this chapter is a model to train shamanized Christians to eliminate negative factors of Shamanism and to inject vigor into positive dimension of Shamanism which can be compatible to the teaching of the Bible.

The reason why the writer chooses Bible study as a method for integrated spiritual growth of shamanized Korean Christians is that in the Korean church Bible study is one of the most important and widespread methods for spiritual discipline. From the beginning of Korean mission, the Korean church has studied the Bible enthusiastically. Many reports and statements indicate that the early Korean church enthusiastically studied the Bible. According to Pyeong-Seh Oh, the first Bible study in 1890 was attended by only 17 people. That number increased every year until by 1936: Bible studies were held in 2344 different places with a total attendance of 178,313.¹

Nowadays, too, most Korean Christians think that Bible study is one of the most important elements for Christian life and faith. There are many Bible study groups within and without of the church. Bible study can be used as the most comfortable method for the integrated spiritual growth.

¹ Pyeong-Seh Oh, "Keeping the Faith Pure", in Korean Church Growth Explosion, 220.

First of all, the Bible is food for Christian spirituality. The Bible is also a norm or standard for the theology and ethics that interact so profoundly with spirituality. That is, the basic world view and values of Christianity are taught and demonstrated in the Bible.

The spirituality of Korean Christians which is much influenced by shamanistic tradition is criticized and verified in the biblical teaching. Through the process, negative elements of shamanistic spirituality will be thrown away and positive dimensions of Korean Shamanism compatible to biblical teachings will be encouraged for the integrated spiritual growth.

Bible Study for Praxis of Faith

In Matthew's Gospel Jesus explains that professing "Lord, Lord" is not sufficient for admission to the kingdom of God. The will of God must also be done (Matt. 7:21). Christian faith as a response to the kingdom of God in Christ must include a doing of God's will. More specifically, the doing is to find embodiment in a lived life of agape-loving God by loving one's neighbor as one-self.²

This saying is necessary for Korean Christians. Korean Christians have a tendency to show signs of narrow-mindedness, and one-sided practice of Christian faith. For example, many Christians give much money to the church, but are often insensitive to the pain and suffering of the poor and oppressed people in their own neighborhood. This phenomena are more often found in Christians with shamanistic ideas. The Korean church must train their members with shamanistic ideas to increase their commitment, to care and love their neighbors as well as God.

² Groome, 63.

For the integrated spiritual growth of Korean Christians, theological evaluation as well as active decision is demanded. Shamanistic spirituality sometimes drives away Korean Christians into excessive mysticism. Christians with excessive mysticism have a tendency to neglect realistic and concrete issues of life. Biblical teaching asks Christians to practice and show the content of their faith in their concrete context of life. It, perhaps, was James' classic statement that put this idea most forcefully:

My brothers, what good is it to profess faith without practicing it? Such faith has no power to save one, has it? If a brother or sister has nothing to wear and no food for the day, and you say to them, 'Good-bye and good luck! Keep warm and well-fed,' but do not meet their bodily needs what good is that? So it is with the faith that does nothing in practice. It is thoroughly lifeless. To such a person one might say, "you have faith and I have works-is that it?" Show me your faith without works, and I will show you the faith that underlies my works . . . You must perceive that a person is justified by his works and not by faith alone . . . Be assured, then, that faith without works is as dead as a body without breath. (James 2:14-18, 24, 26)

Bible study for praxis of faith is necessary to present Korean Christians.

The Methodology of Bible Study: Shared Christian Praxis **of Thomas H. Groome**

Shared Christian Praxis will be used as a methodology for Bible study for praxis of faith. This methodology originated with Thomas H. Groome. He says "Christian religious education by shared praxis can be described as a group of Christians sharing in dialogue their critical reflection on present action in light of the Christian Story and its Vision toward the end of lived Christian faith."³ Thomas H. Groome has five main components in Christian education by shared praxis. Each shared praxis exercise has a particular focus of attention.

³ Groome, 184.

1. The participants are invited to name their own activity concerning the topic for attention (present action).
2. They are invited to reflect on why they do what they do, and what the likely or intended consequences of their actions are (critical reflection).
3. The educator makes present to the group the Christian community Story concerning the topic at hand and the faith response it invites (Story and its Vision).
4. The participants are invited to appropriate the Story to their lives in a dialectic with their own stories (dialectic between Story and stories).
5. There is an opportunity to choose a personal faith response for the future (dialectic between Vision and visions).⁴

The Korean church needs a training program for “problem-solving” critical reflection on the present reality approach. The religiosity and spirituality of Korean Christians was one-sidedly transmitted and kept by charismatic leadership from Shamanism and cramming education from Confucianism. Thomas H. Groome’s shared Praxis will prompt passive Korean Christians to have critical consciousness in their present content of faith and to draw out future decision through the dialogue with the Christian community’s Story and Vision.

Practices of Bible Study

Session 1: Bible Study for Mature Prayer

Introduction: Enthusiastic prayer is one of the most outstanding characteristics of Korean Christians. The enthusiastic prayer of Korean Christians has been a dynamic power in their spiritual life and Korean church growth. Enthusiastic prayer in the Korean church, first of all, is directly related to biblical teaching and Christian tradition.

⁴ Ibid., 207-08.

The Bible itself asks Christians to pray fervently. However, the inclination toward fervent prayer in Korean Christians is fundamentally related to the shamanistic religiosity of the Korean people. Before Christianity was introduced to Korea, Koreans already knew the power or importance of prayer in their shamanistic spiritual life.

Fervent prayer is a positive element of spiritual life of Korean Christians. However, in the case of Korean Christians, there are some problems of prayer to be solved. For example, many Christians have a tendency to show selfish, narrow-minded practice of prayer. They pray enthusiastically. However their concern is related to only their own well-being: blessings, health, success, and healing. They are often insensitive to the pain and suffering of the poor and oppressed people in their own neighborhood. The goal of this session is to train Korean Christians with narrow-minded practice of prayer to increase their commitment, to care and love their neighbors as well as God.

Audience: Adult members who pray fervently, but who are devoted to individual blessings.

Procedure of This session

Step 1: Naming Present Action -- The Participants are invited to name their own activity concerning prayer for attention (present action). Before reading the Scripture lesson, ask people to think about the times in their lives they have prayed enthusiastically. The important task of this step is to elicit a personal statement on present action rather than a statement of theory based on what they say. Questions for naming present action are as follows:

1. What prayers do you say?

2. How do you say them?
3. What do you say when you talk to God?
4. How often do you pray?
5. Did you pray to gods before you became a Christian? If so, How did you pray?

In this question, the participants share experiences and cases of Korean traditional prayer which is related to shamanistic spirituality.

Step 2: The Participant's Stories and Visions -- It is a reflection on "Why we do what we do and what our hopes are in doing it." This second step is first looking discerningly at present action to see the "obvious" about it, but it is also an attempt to go below the obvious, to become aware of its source, the genesis of present action. Question for critical reflection of present action are as follows:

1. What is "Praying?"
2. Why do you pray? In this step, the participants share their honest understanding and practice of prayer.
3. What is the most important theme in your prayer? -- Many Korean Christians with shamanistic idea still pray for only their own well-being.
4. Are any other kinds of prayer we could say or any other reason?

Through this step, shamanized Christians are invited to understand that prayer is over getting something from God for individual blessing.

Step 3: The Christian Community's Story and Vision -- In this step the Christian community story and its vision are suggested to the participants. Scripture reading and reflection is as follows:

Luke 22:41-44 Jesus' prayer at Gethsemane

Matthew 7:21 Do the will of my Father.

James 4:3 Prayer with wrong motives

Matthew 6:9-13 Lord's Prayer.

1. Ask the group to read the selected passage in silence and then ask one member of the group to read it aloud. Then spend a few moments in silence, allowing each member to re-read and reflect on the passage with one question for reflection. Some may wish to write their reactions to the passages. Sample questions include: What do I learn from this passage? What do I hear in this passage? What feelings are present in the passage, and what feelings are triggered in me as I read it? What does this passage teach, and what can I learn from it?

2. After a few moments of silence, ask for one person to share their answer to the question that has been asked. Group members may ask the person sharing to say more or to explain something.

3. Summary: In this step, the participants learn that prayer is not a petition for only individual well-being, but that it is an expression of praise, Thanksgivings, confession, and dedication toward God.

Step 4: Dialectical Hermeneutic between the Story and the Participant's Stories --

This step is a critique of the Story in light of the stories and a critique of the participants' present stories in the light of the past Story. Here, the teacher asks the class to think about both what they have just heard in Scripture (the Story) and their own earlier

responses to the passage. Each person is asked to look for contrasts, meeting points, and confrontations. Question for this step is as follows:

1. Ask the participants what they now think about prayer and about how Jesus had prayed.
2. What elements does prayer include?
3. What is the similarity and difference between prayer of shamanized Christians and prayer in the biblical passages? Let the participants compare the theme, type, and contents of prayer.
4. Summary: Through this step, the participants learn the strength and weakness of Korean Christians with shamanistic religiosity.

Step 5: Dialectical Hermeneutic between the Vision and Participants' Visions --

This last step is asking, "How is our present action creative or noncreative of the Vision, and how will we act in the future?" This step is an opportunity for the individual and the group to choose a faith response, a Christian praxis, in light of all that has gone before.

Basic direction for mature prayer is as follows:

1. The prayer to seek the will of God ,
2. The prayer to avoid selfish motive,
3. The prayer to accompany sound action.

Questions for practice of mature prayer are as follows:

1. Will you pray? What will you say?
2. Will you pray for the strengthening of Christian spirituality which is a specific quality of relationship-loving God, neighbor, and self and to receive love and grace?

3. What do you want to do for practice of mature prayer?

Conclusion: Prayer is one important means of grace and an essential part of Christian practice. Through this reflection, Korean Christians with narrow-minded practice of prayer will increase their commitment to care and love their neighbors as well as God.

Session 2 : Minjung and Han

Introduction: Korean minjung have thought that a real religion has liberating spirituality to vent minjung's Han. The Korean people have historically accumulated Han during the long periods of persecution and suffering from within and without. It is not merely a psychological state, but also political and economic realities interacting and bringing themselves to bear on the mind and body of the minjung. Korean Shamanism was the religion for the minjung, especially--the poor, oppressed, sick, and socially marginalized. A shaman, a central character of Shamanism and charismatic leader of the practice of Shamanism is a wounded-healer who knows quite well the existential predicament of humans. Especially, the kut performed together by a shaman and minjung is one of the most important liberating spiritual experiences venting the minjung's Han. The goal of this session is to train Korean Christians to draw liberating spirituality for the minjung, which is compatible to Jesus' spirituality, from the shamanistic spirituality, and to live with the spirituality.

Audience: Adult members who recognize the liberating spirituality in Shamanism.

Procedure of This Session

Step 1: Naming Present Action -- The Participants are invited to name their own

activity concerning becoming a Christian and their suffering for attention. Questions for naming present action are as follows:

1. When did you became a Christian? How did you feel about that? At that time, what were reactions of our family, relatives, or friends? Welcome? Oppression? Indifference?

2. How did you response about the reaction?

3. Who influenced you to be a Christian?

Through these questions, the participants share their experiences and feelings when they became Christians.

Step 2: The Participant's Stories and Visions -- It is a reflection on "why do want be a Christians and what our hopes are in doing so?" Questions of this step ask participants for honest and concrete answers. Questions for naming present action are as follows:

1. Have you ever experienced some terrible events? When? Where? By whom? By what?

2. How did the event influence your physical condition and mental condition?

3. Have you ever visited a shaman or attended a shamanistic ritual to alleviate your suffering? How did you feel about that?

4. Why did you become a Christian?

5. What was an ultimate goal of your faith?

6. How did the Christian faith affect you?

Through this step, the participants, especially Christians with shamanistic ideas, realize that they become Christians to overcome their existential predicament.

Step 3: The Christian Community's Story and Vision -- In this step the Christian community's story and its vision are suggested to the participants. Scripture reading and reflection are as follows:

Psalms	23: 1-6	The Lord is my shepherd.
Matthew	11:28	I will give you rest.
Mark	1:9	Galilee -- the center of Jesus mission
Mark	16:1-7	Galilee -- the resurrected Lord
Luke	4:17-18	The Lord's favor

1. Ask the group to read the selected passage in silence and then ask one member of the group to read it aloud. Then spend a few moments in silence, allowing each member to re-read and reflect on the passage with "questions for reflection." Sample questions include:

What do I hear in this passage?

What feelings are present in the passage?

What does this passage teach?

What can I learn from it?

2. After a few moments of silence, ask for one person to share their answer to the question that has been asked.

Through this session, the teacher teaches why Jesus came to us and what Jesus did at that time. The participants learn that the life of the historical Jesus is the life for the minjung--the poor, sick, oppressed, and socially marginalized.

Step 4: Dialectical Hermeneutic between the Story and the Participant's Stories --

This step is a critique of the Story in the light of the stories and a critique of the participants' present stories in the light of the past Story. Each person is asked to look for contrasts, meeting points, and confrontations. Questions for this step are as follows:

1. Ask the participants what they now think about suffering and about how Jesus had thought.
2. What is the similarity and difference between shamanistic liberating spirituality and ritual for venting minjung's Han, and the historical Jesus' life and teaching. Let the participants compare the theme, the types of ritual, and existential desires.

Through this step, the participants learn the strength and weakness of Korean Christians with shamanistic religiosity.

Step 5 : Dialectical Hermeneutic between the Vision and Participants' Visions --

This step is an opportunity for the individual and the group to choose a faith response, a Christian praxis, in the light of all that has gone before. Questions for individual or communal practice are as follows:

1. What are sufferings of our neighborhood?
2. What are serious problems in this community?
3. How does our church response to serious problems?
4. What is your decision for practicing the life of discipleship of Jesus?

Conclusion: Korean minjung theologians discovered anew that Korean Shamanism is the religion of the minjung with Han. Korean Shamanism's concern is to overcome the Han of an individual as well as the collective Han of the minjung. This is the

spirituality which could be compatible with the spirituality that the historical Jesus taught and practiced. Therefore shamanistic traditions as a liberating spirituality venting the minjung's Han, which was already rooted in the mind of Korean people, could be a vitality to accept and practice the liberating spirituality of historical Jesus.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

Summary of Findings

Korean Shamanism is the oldest religion in Korea. The shamanistic tradition is closely woven into the fabric of Korean life and is even now a determinant of Korean world-view, as well as its family and social custom at all societal levels.

Nevertheless, the academic study of Korean shamanism has long suffered from neglect, distortion, and cultural bias. When the Protestants came to Korea, early Protestant missionaries also regarded Korean Shamanism as a superstitious and primitive tradition. They forced Korean Christians to throw away all the ways of Korean Shamanism. However, the shamanistic influences did not disappear and were still found in the faith and daily life of Korean Christians.

Particularly at times of individual and social crises, this religion becomes more prevalent and provides the means to solve problems through their own traditional methods, magical rituals and divination. Even after the modernization of the Korean society, the people's practice of shamanistic faith has not decreased.

In this project I have tried to disclose the nature of Korean Shamanism by analyzing the major aspects of this religious practice. On the basis of this analysis, I assessed the shamanistic influence on Korean Christian spirituality, and examined how the liberating spirituality in Korean Shamanism can be used as a spiritual resource for Korean Christians.

First of all, a shaman is a central character of Shamanism -- a charismatic leader of

the practice of Shamanism. The shaman was once sick with a mental sickness. She was once called mad and spirit-possessed. The shaman has the experience of overcoming and transcending her physical illness, spiritual illness and the suffering of mental sickness. Therefore, Korean people with shamanistic ideas believe that the shaman understands her client's grievances and suffering, and that she can resolve their existential predicaments. She resolves their suffering in rituals that involve worshipping together, dancing together, and singing together.

It was found in this analysis that Korean Shamanism is a primitive magio-religious practice through which people seek to control nature and spiritual entities for the purpose of human exploitation. The shaman, as a medium between the natural world of mortals and the supernatural world of spirits, supplicates to the spirit-gods for the welfare, longevity, and blessing of human life.

According to this analysis, Kut, the ritual of this religion, is believed to have the magical power to transform human disasters into blessings. This Kut is a drama between humans and spirits. Through the kut, the spirits of the past come into the world to give blessing to the people of the present. It is a drama of cosmic fighting between spirits. Extensive dances and songs used in the ritual enable the Mudang to be united with the spirit-gods to achieve human wishes. Magical objects and techniques help the shaman to control the spirit-gods and the evil spirits and to transform the ill fortunes into blessing of life.

Korean Christianity was not rooted nor has it grown in a state of religious vacuum. Just as Korean Shamanism has influenced Buddhism and Confucianism, it also has

influenced Korean Christianity. As I mentioned in Chapter 3, zealous prayer, Holy Spirit movement, charismatic leadership, blessing-centered faith and miracle-centered faith are certain evidences which are deeply related to shamanistic spirituality. First of all, the growth of the Korean church has a lot to do with the shamanistic mind-set of the Korean people, despite the fact that Christianity in Korea oppressed Shamanism and set out to destroy the shaman religion.

In Chapter 5, I offered two models of Bible study for understanding and practicing spirituality in Korean Shamanism. One is the Bible study for mature prayer, the other is the Bible study for the minjung and Han. Fervent prayer is one of the most outstanding characteristics of Korean Christians. Korean Christians can lift the level of prayer from selfish and individual prayer to dedicated and communal prayer through the Bible study.

Korean minjung live with Han. Han is an underlying feeling of the Korean people. Han is not merely a psychological state, but also a political and economic reality interacting and bringing themselves to bear on the mind and body of the minjung.

The Korean minjung with Han turn to Shamanism out of their social deprivation, poverty, ignorance, suffering and misfortune imposed upon them by their social fate. It is clear that Korean Shamanism is an expression of the powerlessness of the Korean people. Therefore, despite many dangerous elements, the liberating spirituality in Korean Shamanism can be used as a spiritual resource for the people, especially, the oppressed, sick, despised, poor people.

The Unfinished Task

This project is written on the basis of document research and my personal experience. It is designed to meet the urgent necessity for a proper knowledge of the Korean traditional religion. Although this religious practice has been with us for thousands of years, unfortunately not many scholars have devoted their time and efforts to investigate the nature of this religion.

We need more academic investigation about Korean Shamanism. For the future study of this religion by theologians, it is suggested that more field research be included, particularly on the practical phenomenon of the syncretism between Christianity and Shamanism. It is also suggested that there be more extensive study on the liberating spirituality of Korean Shamanism. First of all, we need to study theologically whether a liberating spirituality in Korean Shamanism can be compatible with the gospel of Jesus.

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